

an eastern house is flat to which there is often access by an outside stair. Having reached the roof by some such means, they removed part of the covering or tiling, and through the opening lowered the sick man into the room where Jesus was sitting, likely an upper room.

V. 5.—*Saw their faith.* The faith both of the sick man and his friends, manifested by their works. James ii. 18. This faith was not, as yet, an intelligent reception of any certain doctrines, but a deep inward sense of need, and of Christ, as the one who only could meet that need. The strength and sincerity of this feeling, they evinced by the efforts they made to get to Jesus. *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.* According to Matthew, the words were,—*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.* A striking example this, of the way in which the Lord gives before men ask, and better than men ask; for the man asked nothing; and all he or his friends expected, probably, was healing. At the same time, the words, *be of good cheer*, seem to indicate that a heavy load was pressing on the man's heart, and that the assurance of forgiveness was fitted to remove that load.

Vv. 6, 7.—*Scribes*—expounders of the law—sitting watching every word and act with a jealous eye; and though they did not speak, there were deep, dark reasonings in their hearts. *Blasphemies.* For a creature to arrogate to himself what belongs only to God, is to blaspheme. *Who can forgive sins?* They clearly saw the true nature of forgiveness, that it is a divine prerogative, that he only to whom the debt is due can remit it. They erred not regarding the doctrine of forgiveness, but in refusing to admit the claims of Jesus, to be the Son of God.

V. 8. *Perceived in his spirit.* They said nothing, but Jesus saw and knew it all.—The prophets, for example, perceived things by the spirit of Christ: he by his own spirit. Sight was imparted to them: original in him. This proof of omniscience should have convinced them.

Vv. 9, 10.—*Whether is easier.* Mark here that Christ does not ask, whether it is easier to forgive sin or heal the sick; for to omnipotence, they are equally easy, and without omnipotence equally impossible.—He asks, rather, whether it is easier to *claim* the power to forgive sin, or to heal the sick. Evidently the latter is the more difficult claim to put forth, because such a claim admits, nay, demands visible proof; while the former is, from its very nature, incapable of such proof. Accordingly, by doing that which is susceptible of visible proof, he vindicates his right to do that which cannot be so proved.

V. 12.—*And immediately he arose.* This is the visible proof; and so complete is the vindication of his claim, that the multitude were amazed, and wondered, and glorified God, and said, *We never saw it on this fashion.* We are not told what was the effect on the scribes and pharisees. Probably they murmured. Though silenced, they were not convinced.

LESSONS.

1. In this diseased man we have a picture of our own moral and spiritual helplessness, as sinners. Sin is a disease, Isa. i. 5, 6; moral death, Eph. ii. 1; incurable by human means, Jer. xiii. 23. But as the sick man had kind friends willing to help him to Jesus, so has God provided for us *helps*, such as the Bible—Gospel ordinances—Sabbath schools. Would that we were as willing to be helped as was the paralytic!

2. We cannot be healed unless we apply to Jesus. He says, Come unto me; and we must go or perish. We must get to Christ, whether through the door, or through the roof. True faith will force its way through difficulties.

3. If we have faith in Christ ourselves, we must try to help others to his feet. See John i. 42, 45.; iv. 29.; Mark v. 19.

4. In trying to carry sin-sick souls to Jesus, we may expect to meet with difficulties and obstacles. The devil and the world and the flesh hate such work. And just as the four men here found their way barred by the crowd gathered around Jesus, so cold-hearted, formal professors are often the greatest hindrance.

From the success which crowned the efforts of these men, we may learn a lesson of encouragement. Let this passage be a model to Sabbath school teachers.

DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

Christ is the Physician of souls. Ex. xv. 26.; Ps. ciii. 3.; Hos. xiv. 4.; Matt. xix. 12.; Luke iv. 18.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT: *The Rich Fool.* Luke xii. 13–31.

The Parables recorded in the Gospels may be divided into two great classes; 1. Those drawn from the material world, such as the Parable of the Sower, of the Mustard seed, &c. 2. Those drawn from the relations of Man, whether (1) to the world, (2) to his fellow-men, or (3) to God's Providence; such as (1) the Parable of the Barren Fig-tree, (2) of the Prodigal son, and (3) of the Hid Treasure. The "Rich Fool" belongs to the second class, and to the third subdivision of this class; it is intended to show that in the Providence of God *advantages imply duties*, that we are wholly dependent