

wall facing the street, with a narrow doorway in the centre, opening into a courtyard, to which there is no other access. Round three sides of this open square are attached chambers, sometimes wholly or partially enclosed, sometimes with only pillars supporting the roof, between which curtains may be hung. The principal, or reception, room is on the side facing the entrance. At the farther end of it, against the wall, runs a raised dais, with a few cushions. Besides these, and perhaps a few scraps of carpet, there is rarely any furniture." (Canon Tristram.)

3. Sick of the palsy—*Palsy* is a contraction of *paralysis*. The part affected is deprived of all sensation, or power of motion. It may render the victim a helpless cripple as in this case. It takes, especially in Eastern lands, many extremely painful and fatal forms. **Borne of four**—He was carried by four friends on the thickly padded quilt, or mattress, on which he lay. "The poorer classes use nothing but a sort of mat, or rug, of goat skin, spread on the ground, on which they stretch themselves, covered only by their 'abiah,' or woollen cloak. The bed in this passage was one of these, probably of goat skin, with a loop for a handle at each of the four corners. We have often met travellers or pilgrims with their bed rolled up and slung across their shoulder." (Tristram). Bedsteads were, and are still, unknown in the East.

4. The press—The crowd around Jesus. **Uncovered the roof**—"The roof is reached by a flight of steps outside the house. From the roof broad eaves project inwards, six feet or more in depth, supported by light projecting rafters. These are covered with matting, or, in the better class of houses, with shingles, or wooden tiles, lightly tacked together. The bearers of the sick man carried their burden up the outer steps on to the roof; and then standing on its edge, just over the chief room, they could easily remove the wooden tiling from the projecting rafters." (Tristram). Eastern rooms have low ceilings, and kindly hands below would help, so that, without any ropes to aid them, the man was gently lowered at the feet of Jesus. **Broken it up**—lit. "dug through," implying of course, some damage to the house, with dust and confusion. But these were trifling matters when a man's life was concerned. The faith that overcame such obstacles was worthy of, and received, the highest commendation.

II. PARDON PROCLAIMED. **5. Their faith**—The faith of all five. "And this faith, as in the case of all whom he healed, was not as yet the reception of any certain doctrines, but a deep sense of need, and of Christ as the only one who could meet that need." (Trench). **Thy sins are forgiven** (R. V.)—"Our Lord saw the man's heart, his misery of soul, that he cared most for spiritual blessing, and that he feared his sins, which [may have] brought his disease, would prevent the

Saviour healing him." (Lindsay). Compare Luke 7: 48; John 5: 14. "With what infinite delicacy does Christ adjust himself to the man's needs—forgiving his sins, removing his fears, quickening his faith, awakening hope, and afterward conferring health." (S. Cox).

6. Certain of the scribes—Luke calls them pharisees and doctors of the law. They came not only from Galilee but also from Judaea and Jerusalem. (Luke 5: 17). "These scribes formed an exceedingly powerful organization in the time of Jesus. They were called *Sopherim*, scribes or writers, because they had been the first who wrote out exact copies of the law for the synagogues. The name comprehended all those who made it their profession to study the law and teach their fellows its requirements. This study required a man's whole time, and the scribes had become a special learned class, which charged itself with the care of the law, as the priests and Levites took charge of the temple services. They were allotted the first seats in the synagogue, the upper places at table were reserved for them, and their dress marked their dignity. They fulfilled the Mosaic law by multiplying its precepts, and intensifying its minute ceremonial observances, and therefore were instinctively opposed to a Teacher whose aim was to enforce the moral ideas which lay beneath the Mosaic code." (Lindsay). **Reasoning in their hearts**—They did not utter their thoughts, but their faces would shew their feelings.

7. Blasphemies—"Why doth *this* man *thus* speak? he blasphemeth!" They think contemptuously of Christ. The word for "this man" is often translated "this fellow." (Matt. 12: 24; 26: 61, 71; Luke 22: 59; 23: 2; John 9: 29; Acts 18: 13). "The sin of blasphemy is committed when what is unworthy of God is ascribed to him, when what is due to him is withholden, and when what exclusively belongs to God is applied to those who have no right to it." (Bengel). This was the first mutterings of the charge on which Jesus was crucified. **God only**—Perfectly true. God alone can forgive sins. Therefore we charge Romish priests with blasphemy when they presume to say "I absolve." "The absolution of the priest is after the manner of a judicial act, whereby sentence is pronounced by the priest as by a judge." (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent). Job 14: 4; Ps. 130: 4; Isa. 43: 25; Rom. 8: 33. Only the One offended has the right to forgive the offence. But Jesus was God as well as man.

8. Perceived in his spirit—This was instantly. He read their thoughts like an open book. This ought to have shewn them that he was indeed "The Searcher of hearts." (Ps. 139: 1-10; John 2: 24, 25). "His knowledge was *immediate* and *supernatural*, as is most carefully and precisely here signified." (Alford). **Why reason ye**—Matthew says "Wherefore think ye evil?" "Why do you turn in your minds towards the judgment which decides me to be a blasphemer, instead