

before him—The words imply a persevering effort. Mark explains that the crowd was so great that they could not get even to the door.

19. **And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude**—Crowds are apt to be selfish. No one would make way for the helpless sufferer. An Eastern house consists generally of a windowless wall facing the street, with a narrow doorway in the centre, opening into a court-yard, 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). **They went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst, before Jesus**—In many Eastern houses the roof is reached by a flight of stairs on the outside. Mark says that they "dug through the roof." It was made of poles, on which straw and clay were spread, the whole being covered with wooden tiles, or clapboards. The description is too vague to enable us to understand the details. The dust, confusion and damage were trifles in comparison with the object in view. The faith that overcame such obstacles was worthy of, and received, the highest commendation.

II. **SINS FORGIVEN.** 20. **And when he saw 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). **He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee**—Mark has "son," or "child," and Matthew, "Son, be of good cheer." With what gentle and gracious encouragement Jesus receives those who come to him. The words of Jesus mean that his sins "have been forgiven," now and henceforth. There may have been a connection between this man's disease and a former dissolute life, but our Lord distinctly repudiates the view that it must always be inferred that special misery is the punishment of heinous sin (Luke 13: 5; John 9: 3). The whole book of Job is directed against this error. It would seem as if Jesus intentionally spoke the words in order to challenge attention to his claims. "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).

21. **And the scribes and the pharisees began to reason**—They did not utter their thoughts (Mark 2: 6) but their faces and their glances at one another would shew their feelings. **Saying, who is this?**—The words

are contemptuous. Matthew puts it more plainly, "This fellow." Compare a [similar use of the phrase in Matt. 12: 24; 26: 61, 71; Luke 22: 59; 23: 2; John 9: 29; Acts 18: 13]. **Which speaketh blasphemies**—"The sin of blasphemy is committed when what is unworthy of God is ascribed to him, when what is due to him is withheld, 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. **Who can forgive sins but God alone?**—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.

22. **But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering, said unto them**—"His knowledge was immediate and supernatural, as is most carefully and precisely here signified." (Alford). This ought to have shewn them that he was what they expected the Messiah to be, "the Searcher of hearts." (Ps. 139: 1-10; Matt. 12: 25; John 2: 24, 25). **What reason ye in your hearts?**—Matt. "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" The thoughts were evil because, in the face of the mighty works and the divine wisdom of the teacher, they were assuming that he had wantonly spoken words that involved the most extreme of all forms of sin against the God in whose name he taught. (Elicott). It is clear that they rightly understood Christ to assert that he had the authority to forgive, not merely to pronounce, ministerially, that God had forgiven. His mode of reply shews that he claimed all that they charged him with claiming.

23. **Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk**—So far as saying the words went, one was as easy as the other, but if Jesus can prove his power to heal, by rising up the man, he proves his right to tell him that his sins are forgiven. If he can exercise one divine prerogative, power to heal, it is a fair inference that he is possessed of another, power to pardon sin. "The argument was unanswerable, for not only did the prevalent belief connect sickness in every instance with actual sin, but also it was generally maintained, even by the rabbis, 'that no sick man is healed from his disease, until all his sins have been forgiven.' It was therefore in full accordance with their own notions that he who by his own authority could heal diseases, could also by his own authority pronounce that sins were forgiven." (Farrar).

III. **SICKNESS HEALED.** 24. **But that ye may know that the Son of Man**—This title is derived from Dan. 7: 13 and is dic-