

The Lord Heals Paralysis

by the Rev. Ragnar Boyesen

*“...that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—
He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and
go to your house” (Luke 5:24).*

The Lord was once in a house in Capernaum, teaching the masses while the Pharisees listened. The courtyard was filled to overflowing. The overhanging porches all around shadowed the interior of the house. When men approached, carrying a paralyzed man, they could not reach the Lord because of the crowd. So they went up to the second floor of the house, out onto the roof, and let the paralyzed man down by ropes through the opening to where the Lord was. “So when He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you’” (Luke 5:20).

Every bit of spiritual life takes reciprocation. The Lord cannot reach us if we are not willing to receive His forgiveness and mercy. This willingness to receive is described with such power in this story of healing that it remains an example for us all.

The Lord healed many people while He traveled through Israel, because they believed in Him. By seeing the glorious deeds that proceeded from His hands, they were given hope that a new order could be given to the perverted world they experienced. Through this new hope they were given power to change because they were given a new faith (see *Apocalypse Explained* 815:5).

Faith is a new order of life and thinking for an individual. And we can also be given a renewal of faith and life when we see new truths from the Lord. However, transferring such insight into the living action of everyday existence can be painful and it relies on good helpers, just as the paralyzed man needed friends to carry him to the Lord. If we are willing to fight against the evils which oppose our new insights, we can be helped (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9399:3). In the struggle of life in this world, the angels of the Lord are the good helpers who constantly bring our paralyzed spirit into the Lord’s presence.

We are paralyzed by the influx of evil spirits who invade our thinking and feeling processes. If we are not given help, we can be permanently damaged. Who has not felt the unholy spheres of dissatisfaction, impatience, all-encompassing ambition, contempt, worries about tomorrow, egotistical over-sensitivity, laziness, desire for what is natural to the exclusion of the spiritual, vain imaginings, bitterness, insensitivity to the needs of others? We are indeed in need of healing, all of us. Without the merciful presence of the Lord’s spiritual helpers we would expire.

Yet one additional thing is needed. We must desire the Lord’s help, and we must act from it once it is given. The Lord said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you” (Luke 5:20). When we know we have the Lord’s forgiveness, we can be freed of all manner of evil.

The Lord told the man to take up his bed and go to his house. Our rising, in a spiritual sense, must go before our return to our house, or to a full life of charity. To rise from the disease of evil, with its weakness and suffering, we must look upward toward what is higher, toward what is spiritual in our life. It is not enough to see spiritual insights above us; we are required to push

away from low evil desires and earthbound forms of thought, so that we may truly lift our whole spiritual body by the help of the Lord's new life flowing into us.

Remember the resolve of the prodigal son: "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). Every day is to be a new arising, a new ascent for us. We can see this easily while we are in church, but are we truly willing to seek healing within the walls of our homes and in our places of work? The Lord points directly to this in another miracle when He asks the man at the pool of Bethesda, "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6). We have to really want to be healed in order for us to receive healing. Sometimes it takes a jolting of our lives to realize that we are in need of the Lord's strength, and that we have relied on our own too long.

When the Lord commanded that the man was to take up his bed and go to his house, He was asking him to change one part of his life himself. To take up a bed and walk in the spiritual sense is to gather the principles or beliefs which the human mind rests on (as if on a bed) and use these to move forward. An example would be when we have been almost paralyzed by a sudden grief or misfortune. We can no longer reason clearly; our spirits are numb, and we get nowhere. At these times we can only cling to what we really know deep down to be true and good. We seek the Lord where we know He comforts us. We go to dear friends who can help us relieve some of our anguish. Doctrines such as those concerning the Divine Providence, mercy and eternal life may stay with us and soothe our mind and give us comfort.

But as time passes, it becomes more and more important not to remain merely resting on our doctrinal bed. We have to get up and go to our house—to the life of use which the Lord has ordained for us. We must actively apply the doctrines we know to be true. We must give new expression to the ideas we previously only leaned on in a more helpless state. As we resolve to go out to others, to see the Lord's mercy in and around everyone we deal with, we take up our bed and walk to our house. In this effort to do from love what the Lord has given us to see to be right, we are strengthened and comforted in a new and more heavenly way.

When we feel paralyzed, we often expect to fail. When we are asked to walk with our bed under our arm symbolically, it may seem impossible. But we need to think of the spiritual riches we have, rather than what we are lacking. If we are honest and look closely, we will see that the Lord has been generous with us spiritually. We can all believe, cherish and nurture the conviction that we can bring joy to others. Above all, we can believe in the miracle of rebirth, which is regeneration. The Lord can form each of us into an angel if we desire to be so formed and to walk with Him. A new life will be born when we reach out to others, forgetful of the paralysis which used to inhibit us. A new life will grow in and through us as we concentrate not on what is wrong with us but on how, by transcending what is wrong, we can give expression to what is heavenly.

Life in this world focuses on this one fact: we must be born again. Let us welcome life; let us look to the miracle of rebirth by getting close to the Lord where He can be found—at first perhaps in the Word and in nature, perhaps among very good friends, or among those who are seeking, or among the broken and bewildered. Learn to listen to your inner voice so that your daily life becomes filled with the music of a true conscience. Seek spiritual expression of your love by giving selflessly of your spiritual gifts. In every hour and every direction, prayer will be

your connection with the Lord. What first belongs to speech when we pray will later translate into action as we learn to be faithful, trusting and spiritually generous. By patiently walking to your house, which is your mind as it is formed in this world, you learn to transcend paralysis by being grateful for each day as it is born. Learn to give thanks until it becomes a joy. The psalms of David express this, speaking prophetically of the Lord's own life while in the world:

*I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the Lord.
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.
Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt His name together (Psalm 34:1,2).*

Amen.

Lessons: Luke 5:17-25, *Arcana Coelestia* 101 10:3, *Apocalypse Revealed* 137