

Mark 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

Analysis

This verse demonstrates extraordinary faith expressed through determined, creative action. The paralyzed man's friends, unable to access Jesus through the crowded doorway, climbed onto the flat roof and broke through the mud-and-thatch construction to lower their friend before Christ. The Greek word ἀπεστέγασσαν (apestegasan, 'uncovered') and ἐξορύξαντες (exoryxantes, 'dug through') indicate vigorous, disruptive action. Their faith overcame social barriers (interrupting Jesus' teaching), practical obstacles (a crowded house), and physical limitations (rooftop access, removal of roofing materials). Reformed theology emphasizes that saving faith is active, persevering, and focused on bringing people to Christ. This narrative illustrates corporate faith—the paralytic's healing resulted from his friends' faith (v. 5), demonstrating the communal nature of faith and the privilege of interceding for those spiritually paralyzed by sin.

Historical Context

First-century Palestinian homes typically featured flat roofs accessible by outside stairs, constructed with wooden beams covered by branches, mud, and thatch. Roofs served as living spaces for rest and prayer. Breaking through would have created significant disruption—debris falling on those below, damage to property, and social impropriety. The homeowner was likely a wealthy Capernaum resident

hosting Jesus. This account is unique to Mark's Gospel (Matthew and Luke omit the roof-breaking details), reflecting Mark's characteristic vivid storytelling, likely derived from Peter's eyewitness account.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What obstacles—social, practical, or personal—prevent you from bringing people to Jesus, and how might creative faith overcome them?
2. How does the friends' persistent faith challenge passive or individualistic approaches to evangelism and discipleship?
3. In what ways can you demonstrate active, persevering faith on behalf of those spiritually paralyzed in your life?

Interlinear Text

καὶ μὴ δυνάμενοι προσεγγίσαι αὐτῷ διὰ τὸν ὄχλον
And not when they could come nigh unto him for G3588 the press
G2532 G3361 G1410 G4331 G846 G1223 G3793

ἀπεστέγασαν τὴν στέγην ὅπου ἦν καὶ
they uncovered the roof where he was And
G648 G3588 G4721 G3699 G2258 G2532

ἐξορύξαντες χαλῶσιν τὸν κράββατον ἐφ' ὅ
when they had broken it up they let down the bed wherein G3739
G1846 G5465 G3588 G2895 G1909

οἱ παραλυτικοὶ κατέκειτο
the sick of the palsy lay
G3588 G3885 G2621

Additional Cross-References

Luke 5:19 (Parallel theme): And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

Deuteronomy 22:8 (Parallel theme): When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

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