

# Mark 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

## Analysis

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Jesus poses a rhetorical question contrasting two statements: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee' versus 'Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk.' From a human perspective, pronouncing forgiveness seems 'easier' (*εὐκοπώτερον*, eukopōteron) because it's unverifiable—no visible evidence confirms whether sins are actually forgiven. Physical healing is 'harder' because failure is immediately obvious. Jesus' logic is profound: if He can perform the empirically verifiable miracle (healing), this authenticates His authority to perform the invisible miracle (forgiveness). The question exposes the scribes' inconsistency—they doubt His authority to forgive but will soon witness undeniable proof of His power. Reformed theology emphasizes that both forgiveness and healing require divine power; spiritual healing is actually harder than physical healing because sin's guilt before God's justice demands infinite satisfaction.

## Historical Context

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Jewish theology maintained that God alone forgives sins (Isaiah 43:25; 44:22). Priests administered ritual forgiveness for ceremonial uncleanness, but moral guilt required God's direct intervention. The scribes correctly understood Jesus' claim to forgive as a divine prerogative—their error was refusing to recognize His deity. In first-century thought, illness and disability were often attributed to sin (John 9:2 reflects this assumption, though Jesus corrects it). Jesus doesn't endorse this simplistic causation but uses it rhetorically.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. Do you treat physical needs as more urgent than spiritual needs, and how does Jesus' priority on forgiveness challenge this perspective?
2. What evidence in your life demonstrates that Jesus' forgiveness is as real as physical healing, even though it's invisible?
3. How does understanding forgiveness as the greater miracle affect your evangelistic priorities?

## Interlinear Text

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τί ἐστιν εὔκοπώτερον εἰπεῖν τῷ παραλυτικῷ  
Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy  
G5101 G2076 G2123 G3588 G3885

Ἀφέωνται σοί αἱ ἀμαρτίαι ἥ εἰπεῖν Ἔγειραι καὶ  
be forgiven thee Thy sins or to say Arise and  
G863 G4671 G3588 G266 G2228 G2036 G1453 G2532

ἀρον σου τὸν κράββατον καὶ περιπάτει  
take up thy bed and walk  
G142 G4675 G3588 G2895 G2532 G4043

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 9:5** (Resurrection): For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?