

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO MARK 2

Ver. 1. *And again he entered into Capernaum after some days*, etc..] After he had been preaching in the synagogues throughout Galilee, and after he had spent some days in prayer, and private retirement in desert places: and it was noised that he was in, the house; a report was spread throughout the city that he was in the house of Simon and Andrew, where he was before, and where he used to be when in Capernaum.

Ver. 2. *And straightway many were gathered together*, etc..] From all parts of the city,

insomuch that there was no room to receive them; in the house: by which it should seem to be a large one, though not large enough to hold such a numerous company as were got together:

no, not so much as about the door; or the places before the door, the porch, the court, or courtyard. The crowd was so great, that neither the house, nor the out places before, could hold them, nor could they come even near the door;

and he preached the word unto them. The Ethiopic version renders it, “he spake his own word to them that came to him”; he preached the Gospel, the word of grace and truth, of life and salvation, to as many as could come near him, and were within the hearing of him. To me it seems, that our Lord went up into an upper room, and out of the window preached to the people, that were, in great numbers, without doors; and the following narrative seems to confirm this conjecture.

Ver. 3. *And they came unto him*, etc..] A considerable body of people, townsmen, friends, and relations of the person after mentioned:

bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four; carried by four men upon their shoulders, as if he was a dead carcass; so weak and enfeebled was he by his disease, that he could not walk, or be otherwise brought; or rather upon a bed, which four men, at the four comers of it,

carried in their hands; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “four men carried him on a bed”; and certain it is, by what follows, that he was brought upon a bed. This man's case appears to be a very bad one, and what seems to be incurable by the art of medicine: it was not a slight touch of the palsy, but a general one, which had deprived him of motion and sensation. The palsy is a disease, whereby the body, or some of its parts, lose their motion, and sometimes their sensation or feeling: the causes of it are an impeded influx of the nervous spirits into the villi, or the muscles, or of the arterious blood into their vessels; which may happen from some fault either in the brain, the nerves, muscles, or their vessels. The palsy is said to be “perfect”, or complete, when there is a privation of motion and sensation at the same time; “imperfect”, when one of the two is destroyed, the other remaining. The palsy again is either “universal, lateral”, or “partial”. The “universal” palsy, called also “paraplegia”, or “paraplexia”, is a general immobility of all the muscles that receive nerves from the cerebrum, or cerebellum, except those of the head — its cause is usually supposed to reside in the ventricles of the brain, or in the root of the spinal marrow. — The “lateral” palsy, called also “hemiplegia”, is the same disease with the “paraplegia”, only that it affects but one side of the body. Its cause is the same, only restrained to one side of the brain, or spinal marrow. The “partial” palsy is where some particular part, or member, alone is affected; as, for instance, where the motion of the arm, or leg, is destroyed^{f24}. Now this man's disease seems to be the perfect and general palsy, which affects the whole body, or the “paraplegia”, which reaches every part but the head; whereby all sense, as well as motion, are destroyed, and sometimes only one of them: but in this case it seems as if both of them were lost: that he was motionless, is clear from his being carried by four persons; and it looks as if he had lost his feeling, since he is not said to be grievously tormented, as the centurion's servant is said to be, (^{408b}Matthew 8:6), whose disease seems to have been of the partial or imperfect kind; or however, though it deprived him of motion, yet not of sensation; his might be a kind of scorbutic palsy. This man is an emblem of a sinner in a state of nature, who is insensible of his condition, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, of his danger and misery to which he is exposed, of his lost and undone state, of the necessity of the new birth, and of the need of salvation by Jesus Christ; and who, as he is destitute of spiritual life, can have no spiritual motion to come to Christ for life and salvation, or any spiritual strength and activity to move in, or perform any thing that is spiritually good: and as the friends of this man took him, and

brought him to Christ, and laid him down before him, hoping he might receive a cure from him, though from what appears, it was unasked by him, as he did; so it becomes the friends and relations of unregenerate persons, who have received the grace of God themselves, and are in a sound and safe estate, to be concerned for them; to bring them under the means of grace, where they may be brought to a sense of their sins, and to a comfortable view of the free and full forgiveness of them, as this man: and this should be done, even though there may be difficulties in the accomplishment of it, as there were in this case, as is manifest from what follows.

Ver. 4. *And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press,* etc..] To the room where Jesus was, nor into the house, nor even to the door, the crowd about it was so great,

they uncovered the roof where he was. The Arabic version reads it, “they went up to the roof”; and the Persic thus, “they carried him up upon the roof”. The place where Christ was, seems to be an upper room; for in such an one the Jewish doctors used to meet, and discourse together about religious matters; (see ^{<4013>}Acts 1:13 20:8). Though some think this was a mean house in which Christ was, and had no upper room, but the ground floor was open to the roof, through which the man, sick of the palsy, was let down on his bed to Christ; and the rather, because the people crowded about the door to get in, and there was no room to receive them, no not about it: but even from this circumstance it seems most reasonable, that there was an upper room in which Christ was, and at a window in which he might preach to the people, with much more convenience, than at, or about the door, where they were pressing: for, certain it is, that he did preach the word to them, (^{<4012>}Mark 2:2), and many instances may be given of the above mentioned doctors, whose usages, when indifferent, and not sinful, might be complied with by Christ, as these were, of their meeting and conversing together in upper rooms. Instead of many, take the few following ^{f25}:

“It happened to Rabban Gamaliel, and the elders, who were sitting **hyll b**, “in an upper room in Jericho”, that they brought them dates, and they did eat, etc..”

Again ^{f26},

“these are some of the traditions which they taught, **tyyl b**, “in the upper chamber” of Hananiah ben Hezekiah, ben Garon.”

So it is likewise said ^{f27}, that

“R. Tarphon, or Tryphon, and the elders, were sitting “in the chamber” of the house of Nithzah, in Lydda, and this question was asked before them, is doctrine greatest, or practice greatest?”

Once more ^{f28},

“the elders of the house of Shammai, and the elders of the house of Hillell, went up, **tyyl l**, “to the upper chamber” of Jochanan ben Bethira, and said, that the Tzitzith, or fringes, had no measure, etc..”

Now, over this upper room, was a flat roof, with battlements about it; for so the Jews were obliged to build their houses, (^{f28}Deuteronomy 22:8), to which they had a way of going to and from, both within and without side their houses; (see Gill on “^{f29}Matthew 24:17”). Hence we so often read ^{f29} of **twgg rd**, “the way of the roofs”, in distinction from **yt rd** “the way of the doors”; by which they entered into their houses, and by which means, things might be carried from a court to a roof, and from a roof to a court; about which the doctors dispute, saying, that on a sabbath day ^{f30},

“it is forbidden to ascend and descend from the roofs to the court, and from the court to the roofs; and the vessels, whose abode is in the court, it is lawful to move them in the court, and which are in the roofs, it is lawful to move them in the roofs. — Says Rabbi, when we were learning the law with R. Simeon at Tekoah, we brought up oil, and a confection of old wine, water, and balsam, from roof to roof, and from roof to court, and from court to court, and from the court to a close, and from one close to another, till we came to the fountains, in which they washed. Says R. Judah, it happened in a time of danger, and we brought the book of the law from court to roof, and from roof to court, and from court to a close, to read in it.”

Now, in these roofs, there was a door, which they call, **twgg t**, “the door of the roofs” ^{f31}; now when they had brought up the sick man to the roof of the house, by a ladder fastened on the outside, which was common ^{f32}; they

took up this door, and let him down in his bed into the room where Jesus was: and because they wrenched the roof door open with violence, therefore it is said,

and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay: opening the door, and perhaps taking up the frame of it, and removing some tiles about it, to make the way wider, they let down with ropes, the bed, and the man on it, together. The Persic version thus renders it, “and the paralytic man being put upon a bed, at the four corners of the bed so many ropes being fastened, they let him down through a window to Jesus, into the place where he was sitting”; which is rather a paraphrase, or exposition of the words, than a translation.

Ver. 5. *When Jesus saw their faith,* etc..] The faith of the sick man, and his friends, who seemed confident, that could they get at Christ, a cure would be wrought: the faith of the one appears in suffering himself to be brought in such a manner, under so much weakness; and with so much trouble; and of the other in bringing him, and breaking through so many difficulties to get him to Christ.

He said unto the sick of the palsy, son, thy sins be forgiven thee; pointing and striking at the root of his disorder, his sins. Christ calls him son, though, in this afflicted condition a person may be a child of God, and yet greatly afflicted by him; afflictions are not arguments against, but rather for sonship: “for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?” He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth, and by chastising them, dealeth with them as with sons; and such as are without chastisement are bastards, and not sons, (⁸¹¹⁶ Hebrews 12:6-8), yea he calls him a son, though a sinful creature, and who had not, as yet, until these words were spoken by Christ, any discovery and application of pardoning grace unto him: he was a son of God by divine predestination, being predestinated to the adoption of children: he was a son by virtue of the covenant of grace, he was interested in, as appears by his enjoying pardon of sin, a blessing of it; which runs thus, “I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters”, (⁴⁷¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:18). He was one of the children which were given to Christ as in such a relation: and for the sake of whom Christ was now a partaker of flesh and blood, and in a little time was to die for them, in order to gather them together, who were scattered abroad. The blessing Christ conferred on this poor man is of the greatest consequence and importance, forgiveness of sin: it is what springs from the grace and mercy of God; it is

provided in a promise in the covenant of grace; Christ was sent to shed his blood to procure it, in a way consistent with the holiness and justice of God; and this being done, it is published in the Gospel, and is a most considerable article in it, and than which, nothing can be more desirable to a sensible sinner: and blessed are they that are partakers of it, their sins will never be imputed to them; they will never be remembered more; they are blotted out of God's book of debts; they are covered out of his sight, and are removed as far as the east is from the west, even all their sins, original and actual, secret or open, of omission, or commission; (see Gill on ~~“400”~~ Matthew 9:2”).

Ver. 6. *But there were certain of the Scribes sitting there*, etc..] In the upper room where Jesus was, to watch and observe what he said:, and did: *and reasoning in their hearts*; upon the above words of Christ, in the following manner.

Ver. 7. *Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?* etc..] They took Christ to be a mere man, and reasoned with themselves, that he must be a blasphemer, in assuming that to himself, which was peculiar to God: they seem astonished at his words, and wonder at his arrogance, and to be filled with indignation and resentment at him; saying,

who can forgive sins but God only? this was a generally received maxim with them, and a very just one. The Chaldee paraphrase of (~~4840~~ Job 14:4), runs thus;

“who can give a pure man out of a man that is defiled with sins, but God, who alone is he, *hyl qwby yd*, “that can pardon him?””

They even deny that Metatron, so they call the angel in (~~40230~~ Exodus 23:20), of whom they say, that his name is as the name of his master, has a power of forgiving sins; for which reason the Israelites rejected him as a messenger^{f33}. They were right in saying, that none but God could forgive sin, against whom it is committed; but wrong in charging Christ with blasphemy on this account; because he is truly God, as well as man, as his omniscience and omnipotence hereafter manifested, did abundantly show. That no mere creature can forgive sin, is certain: good men may, and ought to forgive one another, and even their very enemies; but then they can only forgive sin as an injury done to themselves, not as committed against God. The ministers of the Gospel may be said to remit sins ministerially, or

declaratively, by preaching the doctrine of pardon, declaring, that such as believe in Christ shall receive the remission of sins; but for any man to assume such a power to himself, as to grant pardons and indulgences, to absolve from sins, is anti-christian, as the pope of Rome does; in which he takes that to himself, which is peculiar to God; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, (³¹⁰⁴2 Thessalonians 2:4). Nor can any man procure the forgiveness of his sins by any thing he has, or can do; not by his riches, which will not profit in a day of wrath, they being not a sufficient ransom price for a man's self, or any of his brethren and friends; nor by his repentance, for though this, and remission of sins, go together in grace and experience, yet repentance is not the cause of remission of sins, but rather the effect of remission applied; nor by his faith, for faith does not procure, but receives this blessing: and much less by good works, for then the forgiveness of sins would not be according to the riches of grace; and a man would be saved by his works, since a principal part of salvation lies in the pardon of sin; and besides the blood of Christ would be shed in vain. That God only can forgive sin, is evident, because it is against him, and him only, that men sin: sin is a transgression of his law, a contrariety to his nature, and a contradiction of his will, an affront to his justice and holiness, a contempt of him, who is the lawgiver, that is able to save and to destroy; it is of the nature of a debt, which he only can loose from. Moreover, if there were any besides himself that could forgive sin, he would have one equal with him, and like unto him; whereas, “who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?” (³¹⁷⁸Micah 7:18). This is a prerogative peculiar to him, which he challenges to himself: “I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions”, (²³⁸⁵Isaiah 43:25), but then this is common to all the three divine persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit. The Father, he has prepared this grace in his own heart; for the moving cause of it, is his sovereign grace and mercy; he has promised and secured it in the covenant of his grace; he set forth, and sent forth his Son to obtain it, by the shedding of his blood, that so his justice might be satisfied; and it is for Christ's sake he forgives all trespasses. The Son of God is concerned in it: as man, his blood was, shed for it; and that being the blood, not of a mere man, but of him that is God, as well as man, it was effectual to that purpose; it is in his name that it is preached, and he is exalted as a Saviour to give it; and as the advocate of his people he calls for it, and requires it; and as he is truly and properly God, he has equal power to bestow it, and apply it as his Father. The holy Spirit, as he makes men sensible of their need of it, he shows it to them, and their interest in it;

he sprinkles the blood of Christ upon their consciences, and declares them pardoned through it; he bears witness of the truth of it to them, and seals it up unto them; so that it is wholly of God.

Ver. 8. *And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his Spirit*, etc..] “His own Spirit”, as the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; not his human soul, nor the holy Spirit of God, though both may be said to be his Spirit; but his divine nature, in and by which he knew all things, even the most sacred thoughts of men's hearts: and as soon as ever the above thoughts were conceived in the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees, they were perceived by him, and told to them,

that they so reasoned within themselves; he said unto them, why reason ye these things in your hearts? thereby reproving them, not for reasoning and concluding in their own minds, that none but God can forgive sins; but for imputing blasphemy to him, for pronouncing this man's sins pardoned; he being God, as well as man, of which his knowing the thoughts and reasonings of their minds might have been a convincing proof.

Ver. 9. *Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy*, etc..] This question was put to them by Christ, in order to prove his deity, and clear himself from the charge of blasphemy; for he that could cure the sick of the palsy, by a word speaking, had power to forgive him his sins: and therefore proposes it to them, which was easiest to say,

thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? Both of them were easy to say, but not with power and effect: they were both instances of divine power, and proofs of deity; and only he that could do the one, could do the other, and the one was as easy to be performed, by a divine person, as the other: and though it may be hard to say which is the greatest instance of power, or the strongest proof of deity, to pardon a sinner, or to cure a paralytic by a word speaking; perhaps forgiveness of sin may be the greatest evidence of divine power and goodness; however, it is certain, it is a greater blessing to be pardoned, than to be cured of a palsy; yet curing of a palsy, in the manner in which Christ did it, was a more sensible proof of his deity to the Scribes and Pharisees, than pronouncing a man's sins forgiven; because this was visible, and could not be denied; whereas the other, though pronounced, they might question whether it had its effect: but by the one, which they would see done before their eyes, there would be left no room for them to doubt of the reality of the other; (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁵Matthew 9:5”).

Ver. 10. *But that ye may know that the son of man*, etc..] Meaning himself, who was really man, and the true Messiah, in which sense this phrase had been used in the writings of the Old Testament; (see ^{<3807>}Psalm 80:17 ^{<2713>}Daniel 7:13), and though by reason of his outward form; and mean appearance, he might be thought by them to be but a mere man, and had no right, nor authority, to say what he had; in order to convince them; he affirms, that he

hath power on earth to forgive sins. As there is an emphasis lies on the phrase, “the son of man”, suggesting, that his being so was no contradiction to his deity, nor any hindrance to the exertion of his power; so there is another on those words, “upon earth”; intimating, that though he was upon earth, in a very low estate, in a state of humiliation, yet he had the same power to forgive sin as in heaven; his humbling himself in human nature did not strip him of his perfections, power, and prerogative as God: and if he had power on earth to forgive sin, there can be no room to doubt of it now he is in heaven; since as mediator, he is “exalted to be a prince, and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins”, (^{<4651>}Acts 5:31), And that it might appear he had such a power on earth,

he saith to the sick of the palsy; turning to, and addressing him in the following words, with great majesty, authority, and power; (see Gill on ^{<4066>}Matthew 9:6”).

Ver. 11. *I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy bed*, etc..] He bid him, in an authoritative way to arise from his bed, in which he was brought, and on which he lay before him, and take it up upon his shoulders, directly, and in the face of all the people, carry it away:

and go thy way into thine house; to show himself whole to his family and friends, and go about his business; (see Gill on ^{<4066>}Matthew 9:6”),

Ver. 12. *And immediately he arose*, etc..] Power going along with the words of Christ, he found himself perfectly well; and at once sprung up from off his bed,

and took up his bed, upon his shoulders, with all the ease imaginable:

and went forth before them all: the Scribes and Pharisees, and the whole multitude of the people, who were eyewitnesses of this wonderful cure: or “against them all”; for being strong and robust, he made his way through the crowd, with his bed on his back;

insomuch that they were all amazed; at the power of Christ, and the strength of the man:

and glorified God, saying, we never saw it on this fashion; or any thing like this in our days. They easily perceived it was a preternatural action, and what could never be done by any mere man; they therefore attribute it to God, and give him the glory of it; they celebrated the perfections of God, particularly his power, and his goodness, which were very visible in this instance; they praised him and his works, and gave thanks to him for this wonderful cure, which was wrought; and that he had given such power to Christ, who they looked upon to be but a man; though they might have concluded from hence that he was God, to perform such mighty works: and these that glorified God, and expressed their thankfulness for this instance of his kindness to men, were not the Scribes and Pharisees, who had charged Christ with blasphemy; for the miracles of Christ rarely, if ever, had such an effect upon them, as to acknowledge that they were from God, and that Christ performed them by a divine power, but rather by a diabolical influence. We never read of their praising God, and glorifying him for any thing that was done by Christ; but generally went away, after a miracle, hardened, and full of spite and malice, going and consulting together how to take away his life. But these were the “multitude”, as Matthew says, who attended on the ministry of Christ, and followed him from place to place, and had a high opinion of him, as a great and good man; though they did not believe in him as the Messiah, and did not know him to be the Son of God; (see Gill on “^{400B}Matthew 9:8”),

Ver. 13. *And he went forth again by the sea side*, etc..] The sea of Galilee, where he had met with, and called Peter and Andrew, James and John; and not far from which were the solitary place, and the desert places, where he was before he entered into Capernaum:

and all the multitude resorted unto him; who had been with him at Peter's house, and about the door, and those who could not get near him:

and he taught them; the word of God, the Gospel, and the doctrines of it.

Ver. 14. *And as he passed by*, etc..] As he went from Simon's house, and from the city of Capernaum, to go to the sea side:

he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus; the same with Matthew, (^{400B}Matthew 9:9), and son to the same Alphaeus as James was, (^{400B}Matthew 10:3), Beza's most ancient copy reads “James”, instead of “Levi”, very wrongly;

but he was the brother of James, and also of Simon and Jude; so that there were four brothers of them apostles: and if Joses, called Barsabas, was the same Joses that was brother to these, as seems probable, a fifth was put up for an apostle, though the lot fell on Matthias. James, and Joses, and Simon, and Jude, are mentioned together, (~~4035~~ Matthew 13:55), because they lived together, and were men of religion and seriousness, and known by their neighbours; but Matthew, or Levi, is not mentioned: it is thought, by some, probable, that he was a loose, extravagant young man, and so might depart from his father's family, and enter into this scandalous employment of a publican; and herein went contrary to his father's will, Cleophas, or Alphaeus, who was the husband of the sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord:

sitting at the receipt of custom; the toll booth, or custom house, where he sat to take toll of passengers that came, or went in ships or boats, The Syriac version renders it, "sitting among the toll gatherers"; and the Persic, "among publicans"; not only signifying the business in which he was, but the company he was among; which makes the grace of Christ the more illustrious and distinguishing, in looking upon him, and calling him:

and said unto him, follow me; and he arose, and followed him. Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, who came to seek, in order to save that which was lost, was now locking up his lost sheep; and Matthew, or Levi, being one of them, he finds him, and calls him by his grace. Christ is always first with his people; he first seeks them, and then they seek him; he first finds them, and then they find him; yea, he is found of them that sought him not. Levi took no notice of him, inquired not about him, and had no thought of leaving his employ; and going after him, but Christ knew him: his eye was upon him as he passed by him, and his time was a time of love, and so a time of life; he looked upon him, and said unto him, live; quickening power went along with his words, and he arose, and left all, and followed him: Christ, as the good shepherd, went before; and Levi, through the grace that was now given him, as one of his sheep, heard and knew his voice, and, without the least hesitation or reluctance, quitted his business, and became a follower of him. How powerful is efficacious grace! what is it, it can not do! it turns the heart of a sinner at once, inclines it to Christ, and causes it to leave all for his sake; it at once fills the soul with love to Christ, faith in him, and obedience to him; it works powerfully, and yet freely; it always obtains, and effects what it designs, yet puts no force upon the will: Levi,

under the drawings of divine grace, followed Christ most willingly and cheerfully; (see Gill on “~~400~~ Matthew 9:9”).

Ver. 15. *And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in his house*, etc..] In the house of Levi; not in the custom house, or toll booth, for that he left; but in his house in the city of Capernaum, where he had him, and made an entertainment for him, in token of gratitude, for the high favour bestowed on him:

many publicans and sinners sat also together, with Jesus, and his disciples; being invited by Levi, and not objected to by Christ; (see Gill on “~~400~~ Matthew 9:10”).

for there were many, and they followed him; either Christ whom they had observed to have called Matthew, and had heard preach by the sea side; or else Matthew; and so the Persic version renders it, “for many followed Matthew”. The Ethiopic version reads the words, “and they were many”, that is, publicans and sinners, “and the Scribes and Pharisees followed him”; mentioned in the next verse, from whence it seems to be taken; though true it is, that not only a large number of publicans and sinners followed Christ, but also many of the Scribes and Pharisees; yet with a different view from the former, not to get any advantage to themselves, but, if they could, an advantage against Christ.

Ver. 16. *And when the Scribes and Pharisees saw him eat*, etc..] They were offended at his eating and drinking, though it was in moderation; because he did not fast as they, and their disciples did; and especially, that he eat

with publicans and sinners; men of very infamous characters, and bad lives, with whom the Pharisees disdained to keep company:

they said unto his disciples, how is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? The Vulgate Latin, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “your master”, (see Gill on “~~401~~ Matthew 9:11”); so some Greek copies here.

Ver. 17. *When Jesus heard it, he saith to them*, etc..] Christ either overheard what they said to his disciples, or he heard it from the relation of the disciples; and when he did, he turned to the Scribes and Pharisees, and spoke to them the following words:

they that are whole, have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; which seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying that he was a physician; that these publicans and sinners were sick persons, and needed his company and assistance; but that they, the Scribes and Pharisees, were whole, and in good health, in their own esteem, and so wanted no relief; and therefore ought not to take it amiss, that he attended the one, and not the other. These words give a general view of mankind, in their different sentiments of themselves and of Christ; and of the usefulness of Christ to one sort, and not another. There are some that cry up the power of man's freewill, and plead for the strength and purity of human nature, and extol its excellencies and abilities; and it is no wonder that these see no need of Christ, either for themselves or others: hence preachers of this complexion leave Christ out of their ministry for the most part; and generally speaking, lessen the glory and dignity of his person, depreciate his offices, reject his righteousness, and deny his satisfaction and atonement: and such reckon themselves the favourites of heaven, and are ready to say, whom shall God delight to honour, but us, who are so pure and holy? they therefore trust in their own righteousness, and despise others, and submit not to the righteousness of Christ; they make their own works their saviours, and so neglect the great salvation by Christ. There are others that are sick, and are quite sick of themselves; they see the impurity of their nature, how unsound and unhealthful they are; that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in them, nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores: their loins are filled with the loathsome disease of sin; they are sensible of their inability to cure themselves, and that no mere creature can help them; and that all besides Christ, are physicians of no value: and therefore they apply to him, whose blood is a balm for every wound, and a medicine for every sickness and disease, and which cleanses from all sin: and whereas such, and such only, see their need of Christ as a physician, these only does he attend under this character; (see Gill on "⁴¹⁹²Matthew 9:12"). Adding this as a reason,

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. These words explain, what is more obscurely and figuratively expressed in the former; it appears from hence, that by "the whole" are meant, "righteous" persons; not such who are made righteous, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, but such who were outwardly righteous before men, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, depended on their own righteousness, and fancied themselves, with respect to the righteousness of

the law, blameless; and so, in their own apprehensions, stood in no need of Christ and his righteousness: yea, even needed not repentance, according to their own thoughts of things, and therefore were not called to it, but were left to their own stupidity and blindness; these were the Scribes and Pharisees; and by the “sick”, are meant “sinners”; such who are made sensible of sin, and so of their need of Christ as a Saviour; and who have evangelical repentance given them, and are called to the exercise and profession of it: and Christ's calling sinners to repentance, and bestowing that grace, together with the remission of sins, which goes along with it, is doing his work and office as a “physician”. This evangelist makes no mention of the passage in (^{<4066>}Hosea 6:6), with which these words are introduced in Matthew. The last words, to “repentance”, are omitted by the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and are wanting in some ancient copies; but are retained in the Arabic version, and in most copies, as in (^{<4093>}Matthew 9:13).

Ver. 18. *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast, etc..]* Or “were fasting”; perhaps that very day, and so were the more displeased at this entertainment, Matthew had made for Christ and his disciples, and at their being at it; or fasting was usual with them: they fasted often, both John's disciples, and the disciples of the Pharisees, or the Pharisees themselves; so the Vulgate Latin reads: of their frequent fasting, (see Gill on “^{<4094>}Matthew 9:14”),

and they came: both the disciples of John, (^{<4094>}Matthew 9:14), and the Scribes and Pharisees, (^{<4093>}Luke 5:30,33),

and say unto him, why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? (see Gill on “^{<4094>}Matthew 9:14”).

Ver. 19. *And Jesus said unto them, etc..]* Both to John's disciples and the Pharisees,

can the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? Suggesting that he was the bridegroom, as John their master had called him, (^{<4092>}John 3:29), and that his disciples were the children of the bride chamber; and that it was very unsuitable for them, and very unreasonable to desire them to fast at such a time, and under such a character: wherefore the answer returned by Christ himself to the question is,

as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast: all which the Syriac version expresses by **al** , “no”: *see Gill “^{<4016>}Matthew 9:15”*.

Ver. 20. *But the days will come,* etc.] As they were in some sense now come to the disciples of John, their master being taken up by Herod, and confined in prison, and so it was a mourning time with them:

when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days: referring to the time of the sufferings and death of Christ, which would be, and was a sorrowful season to his disciples.

Ver. 21. *No man also seweth a piece of new cloth,* The traditions of the elders are meant, particularly concerning eating and drinking, and fasting, things before spoken of; and which occasioned this parable, and which were new things in comparison of the commands of God: some of them were of very short standing, devised in, that age; and most, if not all of them, were since the times of Ezra.

On an old garment; the moral and ceremonial righteousness of the Jews, in obedience to the law of God; signifying, that the former were not to be joined with these, to make up a justifying righteousness before God; which were not sufficient for such a purpose, either singly, or both together:

else the new piece that filled it up, taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse; for by attendance to the traditions of the elders, the Jews were taken off from, and neglected the commandments of God; nay, oftentimes the commands of God were made void by these traditions, so that the old garment of their own righteousness, which was very ragged and imperfect of itself, instead of being purer and more perfect, became much the worse, even for the purpose for which it was intended; (see Gill on “^{<4016>}Matthew 9:16”).

Ver. 22. *And no man putteth new wine into old bottles,* etc.] By “old bottles” are meant, the Scribes and Pharisees, the whole, which needed not a physician, and the righteous, Christ came not to call; and by new wine, either the love of God, which is not shed abroad in the hearts of such persons; or the blessings of the new covenant, which are not bestowed upon them; or the Gospel, which brings an account of both, which is not received by carnal men:

else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: the Gospel will only fill them with rage and fury,

and they will despise it, and let it go; which will be an aggravation of their sin and misery, and so will prove the savour of death unto death unto them:

but new wine must be put into new bottles; into the hearts of sinners, who are called to repentance, and are renewed in the Spirit of their minds; are newborn babes, that desire the sincere milk of the word, and wine of the Gospel; in these the love of God is exceeding abundant, and it comes in with full flows into their souls; all grace is made to abound towards them, and the word of Christ richly dwells in them; in whom these things remain and abide, and they themselves are saved with an everlasting salvation; (see Gill on “^{<4097>}Matthew 9:17”).

Ver. 23. *And it came to pass*, etc..] The Vulgate Latin adds, “again”; and so Beza says it was read in one of his copies:

that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day, and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn, and to rub them, and get the grain out of them, and eat them; (see Gill on “^{<4101>}Matthew 12:1”).

Ver. 24. *And the Pharisees said unto him*, etc..] To Christ, the same they said to his disciples, (^{<4102>}Luke 6:2).

Behold, why do they on the sabbath day, that which is not lawful? see how they pluck the ears of corn and rub them, and eat things, which by the law, especially by the traditions of the elders, were not lawful to be done on the sabbath day; (see Gill on “^{<4103>}Matthew 12:2”).

Ver. 25. *And he said unto them*, etc..] By way of answer to their question, and which was a full one, and enough to silence them:

have ye never read what David did; referring to the history in (^{<4201>}1 Samuel 21:1-15).

when he had need: of bread, was in great necessity, and in the utmost distress:

and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? which was a justifiable reason for what he and his company did; as it was for the action of the disciples; being in a like case, and therefore very appropriate to the purpose; (see Gill on “^{<4103>}Matthew 12:3”).

Ver. 26. *How he went into the house of God*, etc..] The tabernacle; for the temple was not yet built: thither David went to get bread for himself and

his men, being hungry: so in a spiritual sense, where should such go, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but into the house of God? Here is bread enough, and to spare; here is a table furnished with excellent provisions; here the Gospel is dispensed, which is milk for babes, and meat for strong men; here Christ, the bread of life, is set forth, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed; here the ordinances are administered, which are breasts of consolation to the children of God; here is a feast of fat things, all things are ready, and souls are welcome, and therefore it must be right to attend here. And this was on the sabbath day that David went into the house of God: when the showbread loaves were removed, and divided, among the priests, and new ones were placed in their room: and so under the Gospel dispensation, on the Lord's day, the day set apart for public worship, it becomes the saints to go up to the house of the Lord, and feed upon the provisions of it: they are a royal priesthood, they are priests, as well as kings to God; and their business is in the house of the Lord, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to him; and as the goodness and fulness of his house appertains to them, they do well to attend and partake thereof.

In the days or Abiathar the high priest: and yet from the history it is clear, that it was in the days of Ahimelech the high priest, the father of Abiathar; wherefore the Jew charges ^{f34} Mark with an error, and Matthew and Luke too: whereas the two last make no mention of the name of any high priest; and it might be observed, that in the Persic version of Mark it is rendered, “under Abimelech the high priest”; and in an ancient copy of Beza's, the whole clause is omitted; though it must be owned, that so it is read in other Greek copies, and in the ancient versions, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and others: wherefore let it be further observed, that the fact referred to was done in the days of Abiathar, though it was before he was an high priest; and the particule $\epsilon\pi\iota$ may be so rendered, about, or “before Abiathar was high priest”, as it is in (^{<4011>}Matthew 1:11). Besides, Abiathar was the son of an high priest, and succeeded his father in the office: and might be at this time his deputy, who acted for him, or he by his advice; and according to a rule the Jews ^{f35} themselves give,

“the son of an high priest, who is deputed by his father in his stead,
 $rwma\ l\ wdg\ hk\ yrh$, “lo! he is called an high priest”.”

So that Abiathar might at this time be called the high priest; and is the rather mentioned, because he was the more eminent and famous man; and

whom the Jews call ^{f36} Urim and Thummim, because there was much inquiry made by them; in his and his father's days, and very little after: to which may be added, that the names of the father and the son are sometimes changed; Ahimelech is called Abiathar, and this Abiathar is called Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, (⁴⁰⁸⁷2 Samuel 8:17), and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, (¹³⁸¹⁶1 Chronicles 18:16). And it seems as if both father and son had two names, and were sometimes called by the one, and sometimes by the other: for as the father is sometimes called Abiathar, the son is called Ahimelech, or Abimelech, as in the places mentioned; and which refer to the times when David was king of Israel, and long after the death of Saul, and consequently long after Ahimelech, and the rest of the priests at Nob, were killed by the order of Saul: wherefore Ahimelech, or Abimelech, in the said places, must be the son of Abiathar; and who afterwards was thrust out of the priesthood by Solomon, for joining with Adonijah in his usurpation, (⁴¹⁰²⁵1 Kings 1:25 2:26). And from whence it appears, that his father was called Abiathar also, and which some take to be their family name; and if so, then there is no difficulty, and the evangelist rightly says, that this affair was in the days of Abiathar: but be it that he intends the son, what has been before observed is a sufficient solution of this difficulty; for the evangelist does not say that Abiathar was high priest, when David came and eat the showbread; he only says, "it was in the days of Abiathar the high priest": for certain it is, that this happened in his days; and as certain, that he was an high priest; and Mark might with great propriety call him so, though he was not strictly one, till after this business was over: besides, he was not only the son of an high priest, and it may be his deputy, and some have thought officiated at this time, his father being sick or infirm through old age; but inasmuch as his father was directly killed by the order of Saul, he narrowly escaping, immediately succeeded him in the office of the high priesthood; and therefore his being an high priest so very near the time of this action, without any impropriety and impertinence, and especially without incurring the charge of falsehood, the evangelist might express himself as he does.

And did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? Who not only ate the showbread, which was set before the Lord, and was sacred, and which none but the priests might eat of, after it was removed from the table; but he did this on the sabbath day; and he not only eat of it himself, but the soldiers that were with him: and all this with the knowledge and leave of

the high priest: for the Jews ^{f37} have no reason to charge this evangelist and the others with an error, that others besides David ate of the showbread, urging that he came alone to Ahimelech; since it is evident from (^{<0210>}1 Samuel 21:2,4,5), that David had servants in company with him when he fled, though they did not attend him when he went to the high priest; and that he asked bread, and it was given him, not only for himself, but for the young men that he had appointed to be at such a place: and therefore, if this was allowed to David and his men, when hungry, it ought not to be charged as an evil upon the disciples, for plucking and rubbing a few ears of corn to satisfy their hunger, though on a sabbath day; and especially when he, who was Lord of the sabbath, was present, and admitted of it; (see Gill on "^{<0104>}Matthew 12:4").

Ver. 27. *And he said unto them*, etc..] Continuing his answer to them, and adding, in confirmation of what he had said, and for the further vindication of his disciples,

the sabbath was made for man; for his good, and not for his hurt; both for the good of his soul, that he might have an opportunity of attending divine worship, both in public and private; and for the good of his body, that he might have rest from his labour; and this was the end of the original institution and appointment of it; and therefore works of necessity are not forbidden on this day; such as are for the necessary comfort, support, and preservation of life; or otherwise it would be apparent, that the sabbath was not appointed for the good, but for the hurt of men. By "man", is not meant all mankind; for the sabbath was never appointed for all mankind, nor binding upon all; only the Jews, who are emphatically called "man", or "men"; (see ^{<0340>}Ezekiel 34:30,31), upon which the Jewish writers remark ^{f38}, that

"they are called, **da**, "man"; but the idolatrous Gentiles, and nations of the World, are not called "men";"

but dogs, beasts, etc.. Our Lord may here be thought to speak in their language, as he does in Mt. 15:26, (see Gill on "^{<0156>}Matthew 15:26"). And that the observation of the seventh day, was only designed for the children of Israel, seems manifest from (^{<0316>}Exodus 31:16,17), "wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant; it is a sign between me and the children of Israel"; and not between him and the rest of the world: and in

(^{f314}Exodus 31:14), “ye shall keep the sabbath, for it is holy unto you”: on which the Jews ^{f39} make this remark, *ymm ral al w kl*, “to you, and not to the rest of the nations”: nor did they ever think that the Gentiles were obliged to observe their sabbath, only such who became proselytes to their religion; even those who were proselytes of righteousness: for a proselyte of the gate, was not bound to observe it; for so says ^{f40} Maimonides,

“those who take upon them the seven commandments of Noah only, lo! they are as a proselyte of the gate, and they are free to do work on the sabbath day for themselves, openly, as an Israelite on a common day.”

Yea, they not only say, they were not obliged to keep the sabbath, but that it was not lawful for them to observe it; and that it was even punishable with death them to regard it; for so they say ^{f41},

“a Gentile that keeps the sabbath before he is circumcised, is guilty of death, because it is not commanded him.”

They judged them unworthy of having this precept enjoined them, as being not men, but beasts, and worse than they, and had not the privilege the ass has: hence one of their commentators ^{f42} says,

“concerning the rest of an ass, thou (O Israelite!) art commanded; but concerning the rest of a Gentile, thou art not commanded.”

And not man for the sabbath; who was in being long before that was appointed and enjoined.

Ver. 28. *Therefore the son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*] Meaning himself, who had a power not only to dispense with it, but to abrogate it as he did, with the rest of the rituals of the ceremonial law; (see Gill on “^{f128}Matthew 12:8”). So that it did not become them to find fault with what his disciples did, with his leave and approbation.