

## INTRODUCTION 引言

A loyal friend is someone you can always count on when you need help. That person is like a secure bridge that extends over raging water. Our sermon title is derived from a secular song. “Bridge over Troubled Water” was a big hit by Simon & Garfunkel in 1970. You are either about my age or you listen to oldies if you know this song. It is so popular that many singers, including Elvis had performed it. Part of lyrics say: “When you’re weary, feeling small. When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all. I’m on your side. Oh when times get rough and friends just can’t be found. Like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down.” It describes someone willing to offer support and comfort to a friend who feels lonely and helpless. Ironically, soon after the song was produced, the two artists parted their ways. After Paul Simon wrote the song, he and Art Garfunkel debated who should be the lead singer of it. At the end, Garfunkel took the assignment. However, Simon was filled with jealousy when audience cheered at concerts after listening to Garfunkel’s singing. Simon was upset because he did not get enough credit as the composer. Even though the group ceased to exist, the two friends get together on many occasions in reunion shows. God does not need to fight with us for His glory. He is the sturdy bridge we can rely on to cross over troubled water. Jesus is the bridge that connects us to God. In our story today, Jesus healed a paralytic man. This miracle is also recorded in Matthew and Luke. The two books and the gospel of Mark complement each other by adding further details to the account.

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Situational Hurdles 環境的障礙

First, this paralyzed man had to overcome some situational hurdles to come to Jesus. The event took place in Capernaum, which is to the north of Lake of Galilee. Jesus used that town as His home base when He traveled around to spread the gospel. The passage says a crowd gathered in a house to listen to Jesus’ preaching. There were so many people that some of them had to sit outside. While Jesus was teaching, four men brought their friend to see Him. They faced a few situational hurdles. First, the man could not walk. Perhaps he asked four friends to carry him to the site, or they had to convince him to go, believing that Jesus was able to heal him. In either case, they proved to be good friends to the patient. The second hurdle had to do with the crowd. The patient and his friends could not get near to Jesus. They could wait outside until Jesus finished His lessons. But nothing could stop them! They went up to the roof. In those days, most houses were one-story buildings. There was a stairway on the outside that led to the roof. The top was flat. It was usually made of compacted mud mixed with straw. Some owners also put tiles over it. Just imagine all the efforts the four men had to made. They lifted their paralytic friend on a mat, went up the stairs, cut open the roof then lowered him down through the hole. That reminds me of a scene in the first installment of the movie series “Mission Impossible.” Tom Cruise was hanging by wires as he was descended into a room in the CIA building to steal some computer files. The four friends in the passage might have tied the corners of the mat with some robes as they dropped him down into the room. It surely created some commotions with the noise and dust. It was definitely louder than a squirrel or raccoon running in the attic of your

house. Then there was a third hurdle. Their actions would interrupt Jesus' teaching. They wanted Jesus' attention, and they wanted it now. To say the least, they were persistent. In their mind, only Jesus could offer help. By this time, Jesus was quite well-known. He performed miracles and He taught with authority. Therefore, Jesus drew a big crowd wherever He went. People presented their requests or they were simply curious to see Jesus. He always welcomed people to come to Him. It is just like Psalm 145:18 says – **The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.** God is always available to hear our prayer. You can pray in our church. But doing so does not make your prayer more effective. You can pray at home, at work or in school. You can call onto God in bed or when you are driving. What hurdles hinder you from coming to Him? Is it your pride? Perhaps you think that you have full control over your life. Therefore, you do not want to bother the Lord with your trivial things. You say in your heart: "Let God put His attention to the helpless and pitiful people." Or could it be your sins? Satan attacks your conscience and makes you feel undeserved of God's grace. He lies to you: "I can't believe you did that again! How can God forgive you?" Do not fall into those traps! A pastor said it right: "God accepts us as we are, but He does not want us to remain in that state." The Lord is immensely patient and gracious beyond our comprehension. There is no problem too great that He cannot solve and there is no sin too serious that He cannot forgive. Psalm 34:17-18 say: **17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. 18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.** God always listens when we cry out to Him. As Christians, we also have the obligation to tell people about our Lord. Just like the four friends carried the paralytic to Jesus, we should introduce the Lord to those who do not know Him. Today, many people are suffering from brokenness. Pray for them and invite them to our church meetings. Some people may feel uneasy to come because of their ethnicity, economic status or even their sins. If Jesus welcomes everyone to approach Him, then we should not set up any hurdle. This is God's house, not our club house. You may even consider picking them up from their home. Show them through actions that God loves them.

## 2. Spiritual Hurdle 屬靈的障礙

The four men overcame several situational hurdles and brought their paralytic friend to Jesus. But Jesus explained that the true hurdle they faced was spiritual in nature. He acknowledged all the efforts those friends made. Verse 5 reads: **When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."** Being God, Jesus knows everything. He understands whether we have faith or we are only fake. By "their faith," whose faith does that refer to? I would think the author was talking about all five people. They came because they had faith in Jesus that He could heal the patient. You see, true faith must be accompanied by actions. Otherwise, it is only some religious clichés. You cannot just pray, sit there and wait for results. You still have to study for your big exam, work overtime on your project or apply for jobs even though you believe that God will help you. We can experience God's grace step by step as we rely on Him to work toward our goals. It was evident that the five people hoped that Jesus could make the paralytic walk again. But Jesus forgave his sins instead. They might say: "Teacher, I guess there is some misunderstanding here." Would you be disappointed if you were the man? Do not get upset if God does not answer your prayer according to your wish. God always gives us what we need, not what we want! We believe that God will provide for us. But we should also trust that God will give us the best results. Those people were looking for a physical healing. But Jesus offered a spiritual healing. Remember there were some religious leaders on the scene. Luke the gospel

writer tells us that they came from all over the places to see Jesus. Their intent was not to learn from Him. Rather, they tried to find loopholes to accuse Jesus. This time was no exception. They were irritated to hear that Jesus forgive someone's sins. They knew that some prophets in the Bible performed miracles. They could announce God's forgiveness. But no one besides God can pardon people's sins. Therefore, those teachers might be thinking: "Aha! I got you Jesus! How dare you to blaspheme against God?" They condemned Jesus for misusing God's name. Surely, Jesus knew they were grumbling inside. He then speaks up in verses 9-10 – 9 **"Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"** 10 **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..."** How would you answer that question? Which action is easier? My response will be: both matters are impossible to do. Here is the key: anyone can say to another person: "I forgive all of your sins." That person may feel warm or relieved inside. But how can a bystander know that it actually happened? In the next act, Jesus made the man walk again. He used a visible miracle to verify an invisible miracle. The outside and physical healing confirmed that an inside and spiritual healing did take place. The religious leaders condemned Jesus for claiming God's authority. By granting forgiveness to the paralytic, Jesus proved that He was God! He addressed Himself as the Son of Man. Such title appears 82 times in all four gospels. It points out that Jesus was the Messiah foretold by the prophet Daniel. God came to their midst to heal that man. Jesus then ordered the paralytic to stand up. He obeyed, and he was healed instantly. Luke tells us that the man took his mat and went home while praising God. The crowd also praised God. Did Jesus imply that every sickness is caused by sin? Not necessarily. In another healing miracle, Jesus restored the eyesight of a man who was born blind. The disciples asked whether the condition was due to the sins of the patient or his parents. Jesus answered that neither was the case. God intended to use the miracle to bring glory to Himself. Regardless, the Bible tells us that every person is a sinner by birth. Sin enslaves us like some form of addiction. That is why we stumble over temptations. We become helpless in sins like the paralytic in the story who could not walk. People show no interest to the truth because their souls are dead in sins. Jesus came to revive our spirits and set us free from the bondage of sin. We are saved when we respond to His calling by faith.

## CONCLUSION 結論

Jesus is the bridge that connects us to God. We had no interest about God before we were saved. We did not want to get near to Him because we simply could not. In our story, the four men brought their friend to Jesus. But actually, Jesus crossed over the chasm of sin and welcomed the paralytic. Only Jesus has the powerful to save us. Recently, I read a rescue story that took place in New Jersey. A man jumped over a bridge to save a two-year old child who fell into the water 25 feet below. The little girl was ejected from a car due to a car crash that involved five vehicles. The man who rescued the kid chose not to reveal his name. When he saw what had happened from a distance, he dived into the water without hesitation. A family in their boat nearby quickly rushed to the scene to retrieve the man and the toddler. Fortunately, no one was hurt. Everyone in the traffic accident only suffered minor injuries. The owner of the boat praised the selfless act of the man. He said the hero might not know that the water in the area was only about five feet deep. Later, friends and colleagues gave credit to the boat owner for his bravery. He felt that he did not deserve the honor. He said, "We're just people who happened to be there at the right place and the right time." Even today, Jesus is in the rescue business. He sends us out to look for people who are immersed in sin. Only Jesus has the power to pull them out from eternal danger.

## INTRODUCTION 引言

忠誠的朋友是你在需要幫助時可以依靠的人。那個人就像一座穩固的橋樑，橫跨在洶湧的河水上面。今天信息的標題來自一首流行歌曲。「堅橋跨越怒潮水」(Bridge over Troubled Water) 是西蒙和加芬克爾 (Simon & Garfunkel) 在 1970 年創作的一首熱門歌曲。如果你知道這首歌，你要么和我年齡相仿，要么愛聽老歌。這首歌是如此受歡迎，許多歌手包括貓王都曾經唱過。部份歌詞說：「當你疲倦時，感覺自己很渺小。當你的眼中含淚時，我會把它們都擦乾。我就在你的身旁。噢，若你在難處中找不到朋友時，我就像是怒潮上的堅橋，我會讓你走過困境。」這裡描述一個願意為感到孤單和無助的朋友提供支持和安慰的人。可惜的是，這首歌發行後不久，兩位歌手就分道揚鑣了。保羅·西蒙寫完這首歌後，他和阿特·加芬克爾爭論誰應該當主唱。最後，加芬克爾接下了任務。然而，當觀眾在音樂會中為著加芬克爾的歌聲歡呼時，西蒙心中充滿了嫉妒。西蒙覺得不公平，以為樂迷沒有給他合理的讚賞。儘管該組合已不復存在，但兩個朋友還是多次在演唱會中搭擋。神不需要和我們爭奪祂的榮耀。祂是讓我們跨越怒潮的堅固橋樑。耶穌是連接我們與神之間的橋樑。在我們今天的故事中，耶穌醫治了一個癱瘓的人。這個神蹟也記錄在馬太和路加的福音中。這兩本書和馬可福音相輔相成，提供了更多細節。

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Situational Hurdles 環境的障礙

首先，這個癱瘓的人必須克服一些環境的障礙才能來到耶穌面前。這事件發生在加利利湖以北的迦百農。耶穌周遊各地傳福音時，祂以那個城鎮為基地。這段經文說有一群人聚集在一所房子裡聽耶穌的講道。由於人太多，有些人不得不坐在外面。耶穌在教導時，有四個人帶著他們的朋友來見祂。他們面臨一些環境的障礙。首先，這個人不能走路。也許他請四個朋友把他抬到現場，或者他們說服他去，相信耶穌能夠醫治他。在任何一種情況下，他們都證明是那個病人的好朋友。第二個障礙與群眾有關。病人和他的朋友無法接近耶穌。他們可以在外面等耶穌講完道。但是沒有任何因素能阻止他們！他們走上屋頂。在那個時候，大多數的房子只有一層。外面有樓梯通到屋頂。房頂是平的。它通常由壓緊的泥土和稻草混合造成的。一些屋主還會在上面鋪磚塊。試想一下這四個人肯定是大費周章。他們把癱瘓的朋友放在墊子上，抬上樓梯，切開屋頂，然後把他從洞裡垂下去。這讓我想起了電影系列「碟中諜」(Mission Impossible) 第一集中的一個場景。湯姆克魯斯 (Tom Cruise) 被懸在鋼索上，他下到中央情報局大樓的一個房間裡偷一些電腦文件。經文中的四個朋友可能是把墊子的四角用繩子綁起，然後把癱子放下去。噪音和灰塵肯定會引起一些騷動。這絕對比在你家閣樓上到處跑的松鼠或浣熊更吵。除此之外，還有第三個障礙。這幾個人會打斷耶穌

的教導。他們想要吸引耶穌的注意力，而且他們想要馬上得到耶穌的幫助。至少可以說，他們很有決心。在他們看來，只有耶穌可以解決他們的需要。這時候，耶穌已經是個名人了。祂行神蹟，祂的教導也帶有權柄。因此，耶穌所到之處都吸引了一大群人。人們向祂提出各樣的要求，或者只是出於好奇想要見祂。耶穌總是歡迎人們來到祂面前。就像詩篇 145:18 所說的：**凡求告耶和華的，就是誠心求告他的，耶和華便與他們相近。**神隨時垂聽我們的禱告。你可以在我們的教會禱告，但這樣做並不會使你的禱告更有效。你可以在家裡、工作場所或學校禱告。你可以在床上或開車時呼求神。是什麼障礙攔阻你來到神面前？是你的驕傲嗎？也許你認為你可以完全掌控自己的生活。因此，你不想為了很小的事情來打擾主。你在心裡說：「讓神去關注那些無助的可憐蟲吧。」又或者是因為你的罪？撒旦攻擊你的良心，讓你覺得自己不配神的恩典。他對你撒謊說：「我不敢相信你又這樣做了！神怎麼會原諒你呢？」不要落入那些陷阱！一位牧師說得對：「神接受我們的本來面目，但他不希望我們停留在那種狀態。」主的忍耐和恩典超過我們所能想像。沒有太大的問題是祂不能解決的，也沒有任何罪是祂不能饒恕的。詩篇 34:17-18 說：**17 義人呼求，耶和華聽見了，便救他們脫離一切患難。18 耶和華靠近傷心的人，拯救靈性痛悔的人。**當我們向神呼求時，祂總是願意聆聽。作為基督徒，我們有義務把主介紹給別人。就像四個朋友把癱子抬到耶穌面前一樣，我們應該把主告訴給那些不認識祂的人。今天，許多人的心靈破碎。我們可以為他們禱告並邀請他們參加我們教會的聚會。有些人可能會因為種族、經濟狀況甚至他們的罪而不好意思來。但是如果耶穌歡迎任何人接近祂，那麼我們就不應該設置任何障礙。這是神的家，不是我們的俱樂部。你甚至可以考慮把他們從家裡接來。通過你的行動向他們表明神愛他們。

## 2. Spiritual Hurdle 屬靈的障礙

這四個人克服了一些環境的障礙，把他們癱瘓的朋友帶到了耶穌面前。但耶穌解釋說，他們面對的真正障礙是屬靈的。祂肯定這些朋友的努力。第 5 節說：**耶穌見他們的信心，就對癱子說：「小子，你的罪赦了。」**耶穌是神，祂當然是無所不知。祂了解我們的信心是真的還是假的。這裡說「他們的信心」是指誰的信心？我認為作者包括所有五個人。他們跑來是因為他們相信耶穌能治病。真正的信心必須伴隨著行動。否則，一切只是宗教口號而已。你不能只是禱告，然後坐在那裡等待結果。即使你相信神會幫助你，你仍然需為考試而用功複習，為你的工作項目加班或積極申請工作。當我們依靠神朝著我們的目標努力時，我們便能一步一步地經歷祂的恩典。很明顯，這五個人希望耶穌能讓癱子行走。但耶穌卻赦免了他的罪。他們可能會說：「對不起，老師，我想祢是搞錯了。」如果你是那個人，你會失望嗎？如果神沒有按照你的心願回應你的禱告，不要覺得沮喪。神總是給我們我們需要的，而不是我們想要的！我們相信神會供應我們，但我們也應該相信神會給我們最好的結果。那些人在尋找身體上的治療，但耶穌給予的是屬靈的醫治。請記住，現場有一些宗教領袖。福音書作者路加告訴我們，他們從各地走來見耶穌。他們的目的不是要向祂學習。他們只是試圖找漏洞來控告耶穌。這次也不例外。他們聽到耶穌赦免人的罪之後很生氣。他們知道聖經中的一些先知行神蹟，他們可以宣布神的寬恕。但除了神，沒有人能赦免人的



罪。所以，那些老師可能會想：「啊哈！我抓到你了耶穌！你怎麼敢褻瀆神？」他們譴責耶穌濫用神的名字。當然，耶穌知道他們在內心發牢騷。然後祂在 9:10 中說：9 「對癱子說『你的罪赦了』，或說『起來！拿你的褥子行走』；那一樣容易呢？10 但要叫你們知道，人子在地上有赦罪的權柄。」… 你會如何回答這個問題？哪一件事情更容易辦到？我的看法是：兩件事都不可能做到。關鍵是：任何人都可以對另一個人說：「我饒恕你所有的罪。」那個人可能內心感到溫暖或如釋重負。但是旁觀者怎麼知道事情真的發生呢？在接下來的情節中，耶穌讓那個人起來走路。祂用一個看得見的神蹟來驗證一個看不見的神蹟。外在和身體上的痊愈證實了內在和靈性上的痊愈確實發生了。宗教領袖譴責耶穌自稱擁有神的權柄。耶穌赦免癱子，證明祂就是神！耶穌自稱為人子。這個稱呼在所有四卷福音書中共出現了 82 次。它指出耶穌就是先知但以理所預言的彌賽亞。神來到人們的中間醫治那個人。接下來耶穌吩咐癱子站起來。他順服了，於是立刻得到痊愈。路加告訴我們，那人拿著他的褥子回家，一邊走一邊讚美神。眾人也讚美神。耶穌是否暗示每一種疾病都是罪引起的？當然不是。在另一個醫治神蹟中，耶穌恢復了一個生來瞎眼的人的視力。門徒問是病人的罪，還是他父母犯罪的結果。耶穌回答說，兩者都不是。神要藉著這個神蹟來榮耀祂自己。無論如何，聖經告訴我們，每個人生來就是罪人。罪就像某種形式的上癮一樣奴役我們。因此，我們常常在試探中跌倒。我們在罪中變得無助，就像故事中無法行走的癱子一樣。人們對真理不感興趣，因為他們的靈魂已經死在罪中。耶穌來是要喚醒我們的心靈，使我們脫離罪的捆綁。當我們憑信心回應祂的呼召時，我們便能得救。

## CONCLUSION 結論

耶穌是連接我們與神之間的橋樑。在我們得救之前，我們對神毫無興趣。我們不想靠近神，因為我們根本做不到。在我們的故事中，這四個人把他們的朋友帶到耶穌面前。但實際上，是耶穌跨越了罪的深淵，歡迎癱子。只有耶穌有能力拯救我們。最近，我讀到一個發生在新澤西州的救援故事。一名男子從一座橋跳下去，拯救一名掉入 25 英尺下面水裡的兩歲小孩。由於一場五輛車的連環車禍，小女孩從車上彈出來。拯救小孩的那個人選擇不透露他的名字。當他遠遠地看到事故時，他毫不猶豫地跳入水中。在附近船上的一家人馬上趕到現場，把男士和女孩從水中拉上來。幸好他們兩人都沒有受傷。交通事故中的每個人都只受了輕傷。船主稱讚了那個人的無私行為。他說那位英雄可能不知道那裡的水只有大約五英尺深。後來，朋友和同事都稱讚船主的英勇。他覺得自己不配這份榮譽。他說：「我們只是碰巧在適當時間出現在那裡的人。」即使是今天，耶穌仍然在從事救援工作。祂差遣我們出去尋找陷在罪中的人。只有耶穌有能力將他們從永恆的危險中救拔出來。