

CHAPTER TWO

Concerning the paralytic.

Concerning Jesus eating with the publicans.

*Concerning the disciples plucking the heads of wheat
on the sabbath.*

1-5. And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. And they come unto Him, bringing a paralytic who was borne by four. 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 paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the paralytic, Child, thy sins be forgiven thee. What does this mean—"after some days"?¹ It means "when several days had gone by". When Jesus had entered the house, the people heard that He was inside and all came running, hoping that it would be easy to meet Him there. The faith of those men was so great that they even made an opening in the roof through which they lowered the paralytic. Thereupon the Lord healed him, seeing the faith of those who carried him, or of the paralytic himself. For the paralytic would not have agreed to be carried if he himself had not believed that he would be healed. Many times the Lord healed the unbelieving sick on account of the faith of those who brought them. Similarly, He often healed the one brought to Him because of that man's faith, despite the unbelief of those who brought him. First He forgives the sins of the sick man and then He cures the disease, since the most severe illnesses occur for the most part as a result of sins. So it is that the Lord said of the paralytic in John's Gospel that it was as a result of sins that the man had been paralyzed.² But the paralytic in John's Gospel is not the same one mentioned here. For the man in John's account had no one to help him, while this man

¹ Bl. Theophylact is here interpreting for his contemporary Greek reader of 1100 A.D. the somewhat difficult New Testament Greek phrase *di' emeron*

² Jn. 5:5-15

had four. And that man was by the Sheep's Pool; this man was in the house. And this one was in Capernaum, while the other was in Jerusalem, to name but a few differences. But know that the paralytic mentioned by Matthew³ and the one mentioned here by Mark are one and the same.

6-12. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And Jesus, immediately knowing in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralytic, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins—He saith to the paralytic—I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. When the Lord said that He could forgive sins, the Pharisees falsely accused the Lord of blasphemy, since God alone can forgive sins. But the Lord gives yet more evidence that He is God, by knowing what was in their hearts. God alone knows what is in the heart of each, for, as the prophet says, "Thou alone knowest the hearts of the sons of men."⁴ But although the Lord had revealed their innermost thoughts, the Pharisees remained senseless, not conceding that He Who knew their hearts could heal their sins as well. By healing the body, the Lord makes credible and certain the healing of the soul as well, confirming the invisible by means of the visible, and the more difficult by what was easier, though it did not appear so to the Pharisees. For the Pharisees thought it was more difficult to heal the body, because it was something visible. And they thought that it was easy to say that the soul had been healed because this healing was invisible. Perhaps they were thinking thoughts like these: Look at this deceiver. He declined to heal the body which is visible, and instead claims to heal the soul which is invisible, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Certainly, were He able, He would heal the body rather than

³ Mt. 9-2-8

⁴ II Chron. 6:30; III Kings (I Kings) 8:39.