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Dr Blenton, a well known psychiatrist, said to his patients surprise that he studied the Bible every day. He said that if enough people studied it, psychiatrists would be out of business. As an example he spoke about the Prodigal Son, and said that if people really studied the core of the story, which sets no limits on God's mercy, all his patients, paralyzed by guilt feelings would walk away free and healed.

This is what happened to the man in today's gospel. He had his physical and moral paralysis healed all in one go. This miracle is set against the backdrop of the unbelieving Scribes who had no love of God in their hearts despite claiming to believe in Him.

We could fall into the same trap as the Scribes and entrust all forgiveness to God alone without any human change of heart on our part. Some people envisage God as someone who waves a magic wand and, *hey presto*, all is forgiven. But it's not like that. Even God hands are tied when it comes to forgiving the unrepentant. Don't we say 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who sin against us'? But the will to forgive on my part can be very much enhanced by other people working in the background. The paralytic, for instance, relied heavily on the local people who went to great lengths to get him to Jesus in the first place. They were forced to strip part of the roof away and for going to such great lengths Jesus commended their faith.

After his Resurrection, he passes on the power of forgiving sins to his apostles when he told them: 'those whose sins you forgive they are forgiven'. That same power is invested in priests when they absolve sins in the Sacrament of Penance. The priest says 'I absolve you', not 'God absolves you'. This is a prime example of the Divine-Human partnership at work. Jesus was a master at the art of delegation.

But, away from the confessional, reconciliation should be the bread and butter of our everyday lives as Christians. If some of our friends, family or colleagues are struggling with forgiveness we can pull levers in the background to help set the wheels in motion for reconciliation to come about. You can't help but admire, for instance the patience of George Mitchell, the American senator who kept struggling, even against the odds, to bring the opposing sides together in Northern Ireland some years ago. He never seemed to give up on the situation. We too can be part of the healing process when relationships become strained. Blessed are the peacemakers.

The healing of the paralytic was a concerted effort by the whole community. It wasn't Jesus acting alone. He founded a church of ordinary people to bring his healing and forgiveness to a fragmented world. Everyone can play their part, howsoever small to bring this about.

At the end of the Gospel today the healed man packed up his pallet - a potent symbol of his paralysis and went home. By our patience and perseverance we too can help people move on with their lives and not stay stuck in an unforgiving past. That is faith in action.