

The Messiah Has Come
Week 35
Matthew (9:1-8)
“The Proof is in The Power (Part 4)”

Introduction

For The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:10

As we get to the ninth chapter of *Matthew's* Gospel, we see the apostle continuing to make his case for Jesus being The Christ, by continuing to tell of the miracles wrought by Him among many witnesses. There were crowds of people who followed Jesus everywhere He went simply in hopes of seeing Him do something incredible. And in addition, many who had heard of His healing powers traveled great distances in order to bring to Him friends or relatives who were suffering from various diseases or even demonic possession. The Son of God showed compassion upon them and was more than willing to help those in distress.

All the while, Jesus would speak again and again of the coming kingdom of heaven; a time when the works of the devil would be forbidden and the power of God would reign supreme upon the earth. Each time The LORD did a miracle of healing or the casting out of demonic spirits, it was intended to be a foretaste of that wondrous kingdom to come, where there would be no suffering or sickness. In fact, we are commanded to pray always for the appearing of Christ and His coming. This command was given us in the model prayer, in which, we hear the words:

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10 (KJV)

Matthew has already demonstrated for his readers Jesus' great power over disease, the demonic, and even over nature itself. But as we come to the ninth chapter of this gospel, we see the greatest power of all; namely, the power over sin itself. Jesus has the power to forgive sinners, and it is for this very reason that He came. This fact confirms more than any other that He is indeed God incarnate, for only God can forgive sin!

It is because of this reality, that we see the Pharisees begin to turn on Jesus. They refused to believe that He was God in the flesh, and because of this, they were left dumbstruck by His ability to perform the wondrous signs that He did. They were given a choice, that in their arrogant pride, they were unable to make. They had to either accept the fact that He was indeed The Christ, The Son of God, or they would have the desire to silence Him.

So many, in this world today, will go to any lengths to drown out the message of Christ. We are seeing a more and more hostile responses to God's truth in our own country than ever before in history. The internet is filled with images of violent aggression against those who would simply proclaim that Christ is King. And these attacks against God's people are becoming more and more frequent, as well as more violent with every passing day.

So why exactly are people so very opposed to the teaching of Jesus? After all, if they truly believe that He was just some ancient preacher who had no lasting influence, or as even some claim, He was only a myth and never really existed at all, then why exactly are they so offended at the mention of His Name? I can tell you for certain that I for one do not believe in the tooth fairy, but I do not react violently to someone who does!

I will tell you why Jesus' teachings bring out violence in those who are evil. It is because it exposes them for what they are, and that is the children of the devil. The light of His truth exposes the vile deeds of the disobedient, and they cannot stand in that light. It is *not* because they do not believe in Him, it is because they want no part of Him. And just like the Pharisees in Jesus day, because they do not desire Him, they will go to great lengths to silence Him. No one knew this better than The Savior Himself:

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates Me also hates My Father. If I had not done the works among them that no one has done, they would not be guilty of

sin. Now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: They hated Me for no reason. **John 15:22-25**

As we look to this passage today, we begin to see the “fracture” between Jesus and the religious leaders of Jerusalem grow in increasing measure; to the point they would eventually resort to murder in order to silence Him. But you cannot silence God when He speaks! A lesson they would all eventually learn the hard way. So let us dive into this great passage that tells of Christ’s power not only to heal, but also to forgive sin, and we will see *The Helpless, The Heretics, and The Healer*.

The Helpless (vs. 1-2)

So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own town. Just then some men brought to Him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, “Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven.” **Matthew 9:1-2**

First of all, we must take note that as soon as the townsfolk of Gadara asked Him to leave their region, Jesus got into the boat and sailed back to Capernaum. This town had become a temporary home base for Jesus, since the people in His own hometown of Nazareth had rejected Him and even tried to throw Him off a cliff (**Luke 4:29**). It seems that everywhere The Savior went, there were those who would come to hate Him, simply for speaking truth. He never forced Himself on anyone. If they wanted Him to go, He simply left them. This is still a sad reality for those who reject His message of hope and forgiveness. I remember one of my instructors in a seminary class I took many years ago saying, “*The worst thing that can ever happen to a person is when God looks at them and says, ‘Your will be done.’ Because when God gives up on you then your situation is completely hopeless.*”

It is safe for us to assume that when The LORD returned to Capernaum, He set up His home base at the home of Simon Peter and resumed His teaching there. As had happened before, a large crowd gathered. So large, in fact, that there was standing room only to hear the Master teach. Among those in attendance we many scribes and Pharisees, who had come to satisfy their own curiosity. Perhaps they had been hearing many rumors of Jesus’ exploits and wanted to verify whether or not the stories were true or merely the exaggerated tales of the common people for which they had little or no respect. But rest assured, what they would witness upon this day would have a lasting effect upon these self-righteous observers.

In order to have a more complete description of the events that took place that day, we need to include the testimonies of Mark and Luke’ gospels. It seems that the press to hear the Savior speak was so great that it was impossible to get into the upper room of Peter’s home. In those days, houses were often two storied, with an upper chamber designed to be a space much like our modern day “living rooms”.

Four men had tried to enter into the house carrying their friend or family member (we know not which) on a stretcher. Being unable to attain entry into the home, these men climbed upon the roof of the house and began to remove the roof tiles. I cannot help but wonder how happy that Peter was about that! But nonetheless the men were determined to get their disabled companion in to see Jesus. So much so, that they lowered his stretcher through the roof and to the very feet of the Savior.

I can only imagine the terror in the paralyzed mans eyes as he was lowered to the floor below. Not only would the experience be physically intimidating, but also being made a spectacle in front of everyone. He had to have had a great hope that seeing Jesus face to face would make a difference in his life. But he had no way of knowing just how much that difference would be. Perhaps he had simply hoped that Jesus could make his life slightly more bearable with somewhat less suffering. But dare he even hope for a full restoration?

Whatever disease this man had, possibly something akin to multiple sclerosis, had left him completely helpless, and had it not been for his four courageous friends, he would never have been able to even approach the Savior. What a lesson for us all, that we should be the kind of Believers who would go out of our way to bring someone to the feet of Jesus! I am certain that there were plenty of people

there who had tried to stop these four men, maybe even Peter himself, when he saw them tearing off his roof tiles! But they were undaunted. And I love what Mark tells us about their efforts:

Seeing THEIR faith, Jesus told the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Mark 2:5 (emphasis added)

You see, it was the faith of these men, who had brought their helpless friend to the only One Who could truly save Him, and when The Savior saw their faith, He acted. Let us never forget that we are called to do the same. We are ever surrounded by those who are helpless, lost, and dying in their sin, and there is no greater cause than this, to bring them to the very feet of Jesus. And He will most certainly be moved with compassion for them. No matter how hopeless or helpless your situation may seem, there is a Savior who knows how to heal, forgive, and restore.

The Heretics (vs. 3-5)

At this, some of the scribes said to themselves, “He’s blaspheming!” Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? For which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”

Matthew 9:3-5

You gotta hand it to those Pharisees, they were always on the lookout for a mistake. As soon as they heard Jesus speak of forgiving this poor man’s sins, they thought, “Only God can forgive sins!” And they were exactly right, only God can, but they were missing the point entirely. The Man who sat before them teaching on a level that they could never hope to attain, that Man... *IS GOD!* The reason that He taught with such authority was because, when He spoke The Word of God, it was *His Word*.

In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:1-5

And then John goes on to say:

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from The Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

So, why was it then, that these heretics could not recognize The Christ for who He was? Answer: They did not accept Him, because they did not *want* to *accept* Him. What they were about to witness should have very well established that He was not only The Promised Messiah, but that He was God Incarnate. But they chose to reject Him for the same reason that people choose to reject The Savior still today, because they loved their sin more than they love God. It is the same reason that the people in Gadara wanted Him to depart from their region. They loved the unclean swine more than they loved the truth. In two thousand years, nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, has changed.

There will always be heretics. There will always be those who think themselves intellectually and morally superior. There’s a lot of that going on in our world today. “Those Christians are just backwoods people, ignorant of reality,” they might say. But I’d rather be right with God, than loved and cherished by this world that is passing away. Trust me. There will always be those who will despise us. But one of my favorite verses in The Scriptures is found in Revelation when Christ reminds the people in the persecuted church of Philadelphia that there is coming a day of judgment when He will set things right:

Note this: I will make those from the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying — I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you.

Revelation 3:9

So do not worry about the heretics. As long as we live in this fallen world, we will be surrounded by fallen people. Just keep trusting Jesus. He is Who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. And He not only has the power to heal, but also to forgive sins, and that, in and of itself, is all that we will ever need.

The Healer (vs. 6-8)

"But so that you may know that The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — then He told the paralytic, "Get up, take your stretcher, and go home." So he got up and went home. When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and gave glory to God, Who had given such authority to men. **Matthew 9:6-8**

In the previous verse, The LORD has asked the Pharisees a simple question, "*Which is easier*", He said, "*To say 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'Get up and walk?'*" The point that He was making was that it was easy to say, "Your sins are forgiven," for there was no way to prove if it was true or not. But if He could say, "Get up and walk," and the man was healed, then this would be the undeniable proof that Jesus was indeed God, and therefore, had the authority to forgive sins!

The Savior knew exactly what this helpless paralytic needed, more than physical healing, and that was forgiveness for his sins, for The Scriptures tell us that **all have sinned and fall short of God's glory**. It doesn't matter how hard you try, you cannot live righteous enough to meet God's holy standard. The purpose of *The Old Testament* Law, that the Pharisees had convinced themselves that they could live up to, was actually to demonstrate just how badly we needed a Savior. Or as Paul would say, "*The Law was merely a babysitter to try and keep us in line until the Redeemer actually came to set us free.*" (Loose paraphrase) this is the actual Scripture:

The Law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus. **Galatians 3:24-26**

Now then, keeping that verse in mind, listen to what The Healer said to the helpless man who came to Him not only by his own faith, but by the faith of his concerned friends, who carried him there:

"Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven!" **Matthew 9:2b**

I tell you now friends, that may be one of the greatest statements made in all of Scripture. The **NKJV** translates it **"Son, be of good cheer: your sins are forgiven you."** For you see, when you humble yourself and fall at the feet of Jesus for spiritual healing, The Great Healer will forgive your sin. And not only that, notice that He called the helpless man His "**son**"! Christ alone has the power, and He most certainly has the authority. So, if you are His today, then be joyful, for you have not only been forgiven, but also adopted into the family of God! Here is yet another good verse to file away to use when you are feeling completely inadequate.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. **Romans 8:1-2**

Had those judgmental Pharisees merely accepted the Great Healer that was in their midst that day, they too could have experienced the healing that was given to that helpless paralytic. He got up from his stretcher and went home as Christ commanded him, not only whole physically, but healed and forgiven spiritually as well. What a blessing it is to come by faith to Christ and be clothed not in our own righteousness, but *His*! And this blessing can be yours, if you will simply come to Him in humble faith and ask for His healing.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:16**

So come to Jesus. Come to Jesus... and live!

TRUTH!!!