

A Paralyzed Man is Healed, and Matthew is Called to be a Disciple

Matthew 9:1-17

Matthew 9:1-8 - *“So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. ² Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’*

³ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ ⁴ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? ⁶ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ ⁷ And he arose and departed to his house. ⁸ Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him.

¹⁰ Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ ¹² When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’¹⁴ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. ¹⁷ Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.’

Background Notes

The miracles of the Lord Jesus were not like the magic of fairy tales. No frogs changed into Prince Charmings, and no pumpkins changed into golden coaches! His miracles were **not** magic. The miracles of the Lord Jesus were acts of supernatural power to prove that Jesus was the Son of God and the promised Messiah and King.

The miracles of the Lord Jesus are also glimpses into the future. They are a foretaste of what it will be like when the Lord returns. Jesus miraculously healed diseases – and when the Lord comes back there will be no more disease.

Jesus miraculously raised the dead – and in the eternal state there will be no more death. Jesus miraculously calmed the sea and showed God’s power over nature – and when the Lord returns, there will be no more storms and no more natural disasters. The Lord Jesus miraculously cast out demons - -and when He returns, Satan will be bound during the kingdom age and there will be no more demonic activity in the eternal state. Praise the Lord!

So the miracles of Jesus focus our attention on what it will be like in the wonderful future when sin and all sin’s bad fallout will be gone forever. And best of all, we will be sinless! Believers will live forever with the Lord without sin. What a great future!

Doctrinal Points

1. Jesus confronted both sin and sickness.

This miracle of the healing of the paralyzed man is better known to us from the parallel accounts in Mark 2 and Luke 5, because this account tells of the paralyzed man’s friends creating a hole in the roof of the house and lowering their paralyzed friend down before the Lord in the crowded house. You remember hearing about that miracle from Sunday school days, right? Here in Matthew 9, cutting the hole in the roof is not mentioned, but this is the same miracle.

The Lord took note of the faith of all these men: *“They brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw **their** faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you”* [emphasis added]. The Lord was impressed with the hard work and the creativity of the way these men helped their paralyzed friend to come to Jesus, and He honored **their faith**. The same is true today. We should be creative in introducing our unsaved friends to Christ -- there’s always a way. For example, last Christmas we left a basket of goodies by our neighbor’s door, and we included a small booklet containing the gospel in the basket – a creative way to share the Lord with your neighbors.

The self-righteous Pharisees found fault with Jesus because the Lord **forgave the sins** of the paralytic. They accused the Lord of blasphemy, because only God can forgive sins. (At least they were orthodox at that point.) But I love the Lord’s answer to them in verse 5: *“For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’?”*

What’s the Lord’s obvious point in this question? Here it is: if you’re God, you have the authority and the ability to make both statements with ease, and you have the authority and ability to accomplish both deeds! If you’re not God, then neither statement carries any weight -- it’s just talk. That’s the obvious point of the Lord’s question to these religious Pharisees. In order to prove to these self-righteous men that He is God and has the authority over sin and sickness, He said to the paralytic, *“Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”* What a miracle! I would have loved to see the expressions on the Pharisees’ faces, wouldn’t you? Here was Someone who was obviously more than a mere man! As God, Jesus confronted both sin and sickness.

2. Jesus changed both people and programs.

“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.

¹⁰ Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (v9-13).

Matthew, a “publican,” or tax collector, was called to be a disciple. He was not popular or well liked by the people because he, a Jew, was collecting taxes for Rome. Many tax collectors would cheat the people and overtax them in order to line their own pockets. The Roman authorities turned a blind eye to this cheating as long as Rome got its proper share. As soon as Matthew was saved, he had a big dinner and invited all his business associates to come and meet Jesus. Now that was a creative way to share the good news! We should all follow Matthew’s example here. We can practice relationship evangelism by inviting our friends and colleagues to dinner.

Once again, the self-righteous Pharisees found fault with Jesus, and questioned that fact that He ate with “tax collectors and sinners.” In this context, the word “sinners” means open sinners – those who were ceremonially unclean. The Lord answered that He hadn’t come to call righteous people, but sinners, just as a doctor is needed for sick people, not healthy people. Notice what He said there: *“When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”*

What our Lord meant here was that He couldn’t help those who were already convinced that they were righteous enough for God, and those who thought that they didn’t need help, like those self-righteous Pharisees. But people who knew that they were sinners and were willing to acknowledge their sins – like the tax collectors and open “sinners” -- these were people He could help and change! Matthew was a changed man when he met the Lord. When a person follows the Lord Jesus Christ, that person is changed forever. Have you been changed forever because you’ve met the Lord and trusted Him as your Savior?

What did the Lord mean in verses 14-17? *“Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from*

the garment, and the tear is made worse. ¹⁷ Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

The Lord meant that His coming meant a change in program. The dispensation of Law was ending and the dispensation of Grace was beginning - and the two could not be mixed. Just as new wine and old wine skins couldn't work together, and just as new cloth can't be sewn on old cloth, so you can't mix law and grace. Judaism was stiff and inflexible. It was ritualistic and legalist. Christianity is neither! Christianity is simply following Christ as Savior and Lord. Many Christians have tried to make Christianity ritualistic and legalistic. It never works, and result is dead orthodoxy.

When Jesus came, He brought change! Jesus changed both people and programs!

Practical Application

Have the right attitude toward fasting.

In verse 14, John the Baptist's disciples wanted to know why Jesus' disciples didn't fast - the ritual fasting that the Pharisees did, and that John's disciples did. In essence, the Lord's answer was: "You need to have the right attitude toward fasting." *"Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast'" (v15).* In this illustration of a wedding, the Lord is the bridegroom and His disciples are the groomsmen. So do you see what the Lord was saying to his disciples? It wouldn't be appropriate to fast when the bridegroom was present with them, but it would be appropriate to fast when the bridegroom was no longer with them. **Then** there would be a reason to fast.

Do you see the practical application? **Fasting is not commanded** here, but it can be appropriate if it's done for the right reasons and with the right attitude. Many of us have tried fasting for spiritual benefit at one time or another. From my experience and the experiences of fellow believers I've talked to, everyone seems to have a different experience with fasting. It "works" for the spiritual benefit for some people, and it doesn't for others.

Notice, although fasting is not commanded here, it can be appropriate if it's done with the right attitude and for the right reasons. Fasting may enable you to better focus on what the Lord has done for you, and fasting may be appropriate for special times of prayer. But fasting doesn't earn anyone salvation, and fasting doesn't make anyone more spiritual. Have the right attitude towards fasting.