

Sick of the Palsy, Grievously Tormented

Matthew 8:1-17

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God brings us down from the mountaintops of glory and into the stark reality of the streets of the city; your city and my city in this report. What we as Christians take to the streets with us today is the information we derived from the Sermon on the Mount; from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Even the enemy of God Almighty will agree with us when we state Matthew is, by far, the highest ethical attainment possible. There is no other collection of words that mankind has in his library of literature that are as perfect as the Words of Jesus Christ Himself in this sermon we have just completely considered and examined in our previous five reports.

Naturally, the question now is: how can we attain to this highest level of an ethical standard of esteeming others better than ourselves and considering the welfare of others above our own? Matthew is going to answer that question with a series of accounts that show the Lord Jesus has the dynamic to furnish the ethic so that it may be possible for you and I to be the conduit for God's blessing of helping others; and friends - that is one of the greatest statements we can make about the Bible! This is what you can define as "accomplishment" or "success" - because Christ is going to carry it out! Christ has made His Word very clear when He says, "without Me, ye can do nothing." Why, oh, why can't we keep that principal before us at all times? I don't need anyone to tell me what to do; I already know what's right. I need someone who can show me how to do it! So do you. Alone, we accomplish nothing. Only in Christ, being led through the Holy Spirit and taught by the Spirit of God within us can we be sent to the world and be used to represent Him.

This is not a biography of the Lord Jesus by any means. There is no attempt to make this a chronological account of a series of events in His life or in the apostle's life, either. We have said at least three times that Matthew has a spiritual movement and if you miss that movement of the Lord Jesus towards Jerusalem as the King then you're going to miss the message of

this Gospel entirely. Jesus told the apostles, “follow Me.” They said, “...we will” – and they left what they were doing and followed Him. Eventually, they asked, “...where are we going?” Jesus replies, “to Jerusalem; where the religious rulers are going to crucify Me and oppress you.” Friends, that’s not a motivational speech. That’s not a pep talk the coach gives to the athlete. Those words were so jarring the disciples couldn’t even process it properly in their minds. Every time the subject came up they immediately asked, “...who will be greatest in the kingdom?” They were only thinking of themselves.

In this report, the Lord Jesus comes down from the mountain and immediately performs six miracles. Chapter nine also has six miracles! Let’s watch our numbers, if you can! That will give us twelve miracles that are performed specifically for the intent of providing irrefutable evidence that the King has the power to furnish the dynamic whereby our ethic of esteeming others better than ourselves and considering the welfare of others above our own can become a reality. See, my beloved, this standard is utterly contrary to the thinking of natural mankind. Some philosophies may broach some angle of this directive, but they simply cannot instruct on how to perform. That’s where all of mankind’s theories and philosophies begin to either contradict themselves, are found wanting, or become just plain absurd.

The miracles we have recorded here are given in a very definite logical order; but not necessarily chronological. We’re not seeking that, and neither was Matthew when he wrote this. I must repeat: we are examining the movements of a King that reveals His Authority. Having just annunciated His manifesto as law in His Kingdom in the previous three chapters, the Lord Jesus now goes into the everyday streets to prove He is able to accomplish His claims to the citizens of His Kingdom. As we have also previously said, I believe the manifesto law that is typically dubbed ‘the Sermon on the Mount’ is an abridged edition; and the unabridged volume contains a whole lot more detail and source reference.

These recorded miracles are, likewise, merely an excerpt from the THOUSANDS of miracles that He did. With the leper, the King touches this diseased man and he is healed; with the centurion, Jesus has no contact at

all, and that servant was healed. With Peter's mother, Jesus touches her and, demons are cast out which takes us into the supernatural realm of the spirits. When He stills the wind and sea that is the realm of nature! Christ has power over natural and supernatural forces. He directly casts out demons later and, friends, that's a superbly stubborn supernatural case. So, we see Jesus move in all these different areas of existence. This is another one of the movements in Matthew that we need to recognize clearly....

1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

~ I do not mean to be tedious, but how many are on this movement? – Great multitudes are moving. This isn't a few stragglers like a poem reading club or something. This is a whole lot of people He has to deal with. Remember, Jesus is up in His headquarters in Capernaum. You can be absolutely confident of my confidence when I say this miracle is at Capernaum. What mountain, specifically, was the Sermon on the Mount given on? That probably will never be answered; I know of three different theories and I'm also confident it's unimportant. Capernaum, however, is important - because we'll get back this issue of location at another time. Here, however, there is a tremendous movement – both literal and spiritual....

2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

~ Leprosy is the worst-case disease as it was incurable in the days we are considering. The leper didn't ask if Jesus would make him clean or if Jesus was able to make him clean; the leper simply said yes in a statement of faith. Jesus has come from the heights and descended down to the depths where this man needs so much help. The leper puts this all on the basis that Jesus was Lord and that Jesus can do what Jesus wants to do! It's NOT always His will to do something or not do something for us. It should be our relinquishment of our own free will that allows the best of God's plan to be executed in our life! Friends, we are getting into the nitty gritty of the Word of God!

The will of God in our lives MUST come first! This is so critical to recognize, and yet, it's so difficult for me to attain to. Is it easy for you? I find it extremely difficult to put the will of God first in my life and I find it extremely distressing that I fail to do so as a constant in everyday matters. We should ask of God in request tempered on the basis of: will He do this thing because we want Him to and will it result in us doing what He wants us to do for Him in obedience? If you find that easy to do – let alone say - please write me because I need a whole lot of spiritual guidance on this. This leper KNOWS Jesus can heal him – it's just a matter of WILL Jesus heal him? This is a little bit different view than the way we hear this taught today. I recognize that. People today who demand that God do this or that and that He heal everyone so no one ever gets sick or dies - and command that Christ WILL do these things, may I say this kindly? - Let's allow Him to decide our lives for us? It's the only way it's going to be done anyways. Why not agree with Him for a change? ~

3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

~ If you so much as touch a leper you will almost always contract leprosy. You won't heal anything! Actually, that would be your prompting to turn to Christ – but it's likely you would have missed it. Jesus touched this man while stating His command – “I will!” There is so much more here that I don't want anyone to miss and one of those things is, “....He touched him.” Not only did this leper have a physical disease but that leper also had a psychological hang up in his mind that was simply unbearable. Perhaps one day this man noticed a small outbreak on the back of his arm. He comes home that night and shows his wife. Well, she puts some ointment on it but the next morning it had spread all over his arm. The man goes out and plows again the next day; but after about a week of worsening his wife is concerned, and she tells him to go see the priest. So, he heads down to the tabernacle where the priest performs the prescribed Mosaic Law as the Levitical ritual commanded to do, and confines the man for the fourteen day quarantine period. After two weeks it has spread all over his body and the priest announces, “....you have leprosy.” The man says, “....well, let me go tell my wife and children goodbye.” The priest says, “....I'm sorry, you cannot go back into the city and you cannot go near them.” This man who

came to be healed hadn't put his arms around his wife or played with his children in a long, long, long time. This leper was resolved to never see them again when Jesus healed him. Immediately, Jesus brings him back into the family of man and into the family of God...

4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeking him,

6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

10 When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

~ The centurion was a man in a position where his authority was recognized as final and was NOT questioned. The centurion uniform alone gave him the tremendous full authority backing of the law in a lawless land. He didn't ask people to do things. The centurion recognizes that the power of Jesus is just a step higher than his – maybe two! We have two accounts where

Jesus “ marvels.” One was at the unbelief of Israel as Mark tells it and the other is right here at the faith of a Gentile.

Alright, let’s consider east and west again for a moment. At this time, my ancestors were in the west and some readers ancestors were in the east. The Lord Jesus says His message is going to get out there where people can trust Him. People ask all the time about the man that has never heard the Gospel. Well, I would rather be the worst heathen jungle dweller that has NEVER heard the Word of God as opposed to the man that sits in a comfortable front row pew every Sunday and continues to deny Christ. And there is more than one way to deny Christ, my beloved. Indifference, coldness and an ignorance of this manifesto - the Word of God - are three of the best ways in the world a Christian can deny the Lord Jesus as King today.

So, someone must ask, “...well, aren’t we elected?” My answer is: no one is ever elected to be lost, that’s for sure! Whosoever will may come is the invitation and that means everyone may come. We do NOT have an information problem today, we have an UNBELIEF problem amongst men! I don’t know how He gets His Word out there to Chinese factories and North Korean prison camps - but if you live in Florida you aren’t necessarily required to sow the seed of the Word of God in those places – or in Nairobi or Tangiers. YOU are responsible for YOU and God is responsible for others. What a tremendously seemingly ulterior theology we have going – does it sound right to you? It sounds EXACTLY complete, proper and correct to me; because this is the sound doctrine of the apostles. This is a marvelous declarative statement in the Word of God that should be music to the ears to you and me....

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

~ Notice the three types of disease seen in this section of Scripture: (1) Leprosy; Leprosy is absolutely incurable at the time in which we are studying (2) Palsy; palsy is a type of paralysis (3) Fever; Peter's mother has a fever. It is likely a virus of some sort. The fever is the only one of these three ailments that is probably not permanent and disfiguring. She probably would have eventually recovered from this fever - but Jesus went ahead and healed her anyways....

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

~ The word "devils" in the Authorized King James Version should read "demons." That is certainly the better translation. Also, in case you missed it before: there were no isolated cases of healing, friends – they brought "many" to be healed – not just one or three - and He healed them all. If you'll keep your eyes on Jesus we will hardly notice there were thousands that came to the Lord to be healed. Although we don't see it, they're pushing on every side of us today. The enemy of God never questioned the miracles of the Lord Jesus because there was no denying them. It takes a young theologian in a dank library with no natural lighting two thousand years after the fact to come to the conclusion that the miracles aren't real. My friend, who do you think you're kidding? When you see a blind man squint as he enters into the light you'll know I'm right about this! Transformed lives are the NUMBER ONE proof positive that the Bible is the Word of God. What many of them wanted to know is: HOW did He do it? ~

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

~ Isaiah has a lot to say in Matthew, apparently. Isaiah's book is so long that it's hard to believe he had anything else to say. Some of you will drop dead by the end of that leg of our safari; not from unbelief - but just from sheer exhaustion! Isaiah will wear us out with information; but, here, Matthew quotes from chapter fifty-three verse four: "...surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Healed of what? - Healed of transgressions and iniquities, friends. SIN is the problem. See verse ten of that chapter of Isaiah. If you're still just a little unsure flip over to the epistle at First Peter verse twenty-four in chapter two, "...who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

We're healed of sins, friends. I cannot make this any clearer. Isaiah said Christ would be the One Who deals with the great problem of sin. I believe it is completely beside the point to even contend that healing is in the atonement, personally; although it is. A glorified body is also in the atonement – and I haven't received my glorified body yet. How's yours holding up so far? Are you free of pain, sickness, sorrow, disease and death? If not, then you don't have a glorified body. There is also that little problem of a new earth with the curse removed. Man isn't there yet. That is ALL in the atonement of Christ, my theological friends. It's obvious we don't have them yet.

Today, while sin and Satan and Christ contend for your soul's atonement, there is no release from sickness and death as an imperative thereof. Paul urged Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach problems. Paul had eye troubles and probably suffered greatly throughout his days of writing. Why didn't Christ tell them to go get healed in the atonement? Why all the miracles? Why didn't James urge the saints to just claim the atonement instead of calling in the elders and telling them to pray? Why did James tell them to use oil? What was the oil? Was it healing oil? Paul went to the Lord "thrice" and asked that his thorn in the flesh be removed; it never was.

Paul died with that thorn buried deep, I promise you. His grace and strength are sufficient because we are made perfect in weakness, says Paul. Most gladly I will glory in my infirmities that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ might rest upon them. I could go on all night, but our safari is finished until our next report ~

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