

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
8-2-23

Matthew 9

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man – Verses 1-2

¹ Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. ² Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

9:1 “His own town” was Capernaum, a good choice for Jesus’ base of operations. It was a wealthy city due to fishing and trade. Situated on the Sea of Galilee in a densely populated area, Capernaum housed the Roman garrison that kept peace in the region. The city was a cultural melting pot, greatly influenced by Greek and Roman manners, dress, architecture, and politics.

9:2 Among the first words Jesus said to the paralyzed man were “Your sins are forgiven.” Then he healed the man. We must be careful not to concentrate more on God’s power to heal physical sickness than on his power to forgive spiritual sickness in the form of sin. Jesus saw that even more than physical health, this man needed spiritual health. Spiritual health comes only from Jesus’ healing touch.

9:2 Both the man’s body and his spirit were paralyzed—he could not walk, and he did not know Jesus. But the man’s spiritual state was Jesus’ first concern. If God does not heal us or someone we love, we need to remember that physical healing is not Christ’s only concern. We will all be completely healed in Christ’s coming kingdom; but first we have to come to know Jesus.

The Reaction Of The Religious Leaders – Verse 3

³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”

9:3 Blaspheming is claiming to be God and applying his characteristics to yourself. The religious leaders rightly saw that Jesus was claiming to be God. What they did not understand was that he is God and thus has the authority to heal and to forgive sins.

Jesus Reads The Evil Hearts Of The Scribes And Presents A Question – Verses 4-5

⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”

8:4-5 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts: This alone should have been enough for Jesus to prove His deity, demonstrating that He could know their evil hearts. Yet He would also offer a greater proof of His deity. For which is easier, to say: Both healing and forgiveness are impossible with man. Yet only the promise of healing could be immediately proven, because though you can’t see someone’s sin being forgiven, you can see that they are healed.

Jesus Asserts His Authority Over Both Sin And Disease – Verses 6-8

⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” ⁷ Then the man got up and went home. ⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

9:6-8 It's easy to tell someone his sins are forgiven; it's a lot more difficult to reverse a case of paralysis! Jesus backed up his words by healing the man's legs. Jesus' action showed that his words were true; he had the power to forgive as well as to heal. Talk is cheap, but our words lack meaning if our actions do not back them up. We can say we love God or others, but if we are not taking practical steps to demonstrate that love, our words are empty and meaningless. How well do your actions back up what you say?

The Calling of Matthew – Verse 9

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

9:9 Matthew was a Jew who was appointed by the Romans to be the area's tax collector. He collected taxes from the citizens as well as from merchants passing through town. Tax collectors were expected to take a commission on the taxes they collected, but most of them overcharged and kept the profits. Thus, tax collectors were hated by the Jews because of their reputation for cheating and because of their support of Rome.

9:9 When Jesus called Matthew to be one of his disciples, Matthew got up and followed, leaving a lucrative career. When God calls you to follow or obey him, do you do it with as much abandon as Matthew? Sometimes the decision to follow Christ requires difficult or painful choices. Like Matthew, we must decide to leave behind those things that would keep us from following Christ.

Jesus Eats With Tax Collectors And Sinners – 10-13

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

9:10 When he visited Matthew, Jesus hurt his own reputation among the religious elites in order to reach out to those who were lost. Matthew's reputation hadn't yet caught up with his new life as a disciple, but he became a bridge for Jesus' message to Matthew's past associates. We should not be afraid to reach out to people who are living in sin. God's message changes people—and their friends, too!

9:11-12 The Pharisees constantly tried to trap Jesus, and they thought his association with these “lowlives” was the perfect opportunity. They were more concerned with their own appearance of holiness than with helping people, with criticism than encouragement, with outward respectability than practical help. But God is concerned for all people, including the sinful and hurting ones. The Christian life is not a popularity contest! Following Jesus' example, we should share the gospel with the poor, immoral, lonely, and outcast, not just the rich, moral, popular, and powerful.

9:13 Those who are sure that they are good enough can't be saved because the first step in following Jesus is acknowledging our need and admitting that we don't have all the answers.

The Disciples Of John Ask A Question: Why Don't Jesus' Disciples Fast As They And The Pharisees Do? – Verse 14

14 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

9:14 John's disciples fasted (went without food) as a sign of mourning for sin and preparation for the Messiah's coming. Jesus' disciples did not need to fast because he is the Messiah and was with them! Jesus did not condemn fasting—he himself fasted (4:2). He emphasized that fasting must be done for the right reasons.

9:14 John the Baptist's message was harsh, and it focused on law. When people look at God's law and compare themselves to it, they realize how far they fall short and how badly they need to repent. Jesus' message focused on life, the result of turning from sin and turning to him. John's disciples had the right start, but they needed to take the next step and trust in Jesus. Where is your focus—on law or on Christ?

The Principle: Things Are Different Now That The Messiah Is Here – Verses 15-17

15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. **16** "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. **17** Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

9:15 The arrival of the kingdom of heaven was like a wedding feast with Jesus as the bridegroom. His disciples, therefore, were filled with joy. It would not be right to mourn or fast when the bridegroom was present.

9:17 In Bible times wine was not kept in glass bottles but in goatskins sewn around the edges to form watertight bags. New wine expanded as it fermented, stretching its wineskin. After the wine had aged, the stretched skin would burst if more new wine was poured into it. New wine, therefore, was always put into new wineskins.

9:17 Jesus used this description to explain that he had not come to patch up the old religious system of Judaism with its rules and traditions. His purpose was to bring in something new, though it had been prophesied for centuries. This new message, the gospel, said that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came to earth to offer all people forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. The gospel did not fit into the old rigid legalistic system of religion. It needed a fresh start. The message will always remain "new" because it must be accepted and applied in every generation. When we follow Christ, we must be prepared for new ways to live, new ways to look at people, and new ways to serve.

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman - Verses 18-19

18 While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." **19** Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

9:18 Mark and Luke say this man's name was Jairus (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41). As leader of the synagogue, Jairus was responsible for administration—looking after the building, supervising worship, running the school on weekdays, and finding rabbis to teach on the Sabbath.

A Woman Is Healed By Her Faith And Her Touch Of Jesus – Verses 20-22

20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. **21** She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." **22** Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed at that moment.

9:20-22 This woman had suffered for 12 years with a hemorrhage (perhaps a menstrual disorder). In our times of desperation, we don't have to worry about the correct way to reach out to God. Like this woman, we can simply reach out in faith. He will respond.

9:22 God changed a situation that had been a problem for years. Like the leper and the demon-possessed men (see the note on 8:2-3 and the second note on 8:28), this woman was considered unclean. For 12 years, she, too, had been one of the "untouchables" and had not been able to lead a normal life. But Jesus changed that and restored her. Sometimes we are tempted to give up on people or situations that have not changed for many years. God can change what seems unchangeable, giving new purpose and hope.

Jesus, Despite Scorn, Raises The Little Girl From The Dead – Verses 23-26

23 When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, **24** he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. **25** After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. **26** News of this spread through all that region. **Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute**

9:23-26 The synagogue leader didn't come to Jesus until his daughter was dead—it was too late for anyone else to help. But Jesus simply went to the girl and raised her! In our lives, Christ can make a difference when it seems too late for anyone else to help. He can bring healing to broken relationships, release from addicting habits, and forgiveness and healing to emotional scars. If your situation looks hopeless, remember that Christ can do the impossible.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men – Verses 27-31

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" **28** When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. **29** Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; **30** and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." **31** But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

9:27 "Son of David" was a popular way of addressing Jesus as the Messiah because it was known that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (Isaiah 9:7). This is the first time the title is used in Matthew. Jesus' ability to give sight to the blind was prophesied in Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7.

9:27-30 Jesus didn't respond immediately to the blind men's pleas. He waited to see if they had faith. Not everyone who says he wants help really believes God can help him. Jesus may have waited and questioned these men to emphasize and increase their faith. When you think that God is too slow in answering your prayers, consider that he might be testing you as he did the blind men. Do you believe that God can help you? Do you really want his help?

9:28 These blind men were persistent. They went right into the house where Jesus was staying. They knew Jesus could heal them, and they would let nothing stop them from finding him. That's real faith in action. If you believe Jesus is the answer to your every need, don't let anything or anyone stop you from reaching out to him.

9:30 Jesus told the people to keep quiet about his healings because he did not want to be known only as a miracle worker. He healed because he had compassion on people, but he also wanted to bring spiritual healing to a sin-sick world.

A Mute Man Healed – Verses 32-34

³² While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. ³³ And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

9:32 While Jesus was on earth, demonic forces were especially active. Although we cannot always be sure why or how demon possession occurs, it causes both physical and mental problems. In this case, the demon made the man unable to talk.

9:34 In chapter 9, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of four different sins: blasphemy, befriending outcasts, impiety, and serving Satan. Matthew shows how Jesus was maligned by those who should have received him most gladly. Why did the Pharisees do this? (1) Jesus bypassed their religious authority. (2) He weakened their control over the people. (3) He challenged their cherished beliefs. (4) He exposed their insincere motives. While the Pharisees questioned, debated, and dissected Jesus, people were being healed and lives changed right in front of them. Their skepticism was based not on insufficient evidence but on jealousy of Jesus' popularity.

The Workers Are Few – Verses 35-38

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

9:36 Jesus was overwhelmed with compassionate pity for the people. His response echoes the deep inner mercy of God, often described in the Old Testament. Ezekiel also compared Israel to sheep without a shepherd (Ezekiel 34:5-6). Jesus came to be the Shepherd, the one who could show people how to avoid life's pitfalls (see John 10:14).

9:37-38 Jesus looked at the crowds following him and referred to them as a field ripe for harvest. Many people are ready to give their lives to Christ if someone would show them how. Jesus commands us to pray that people will respond to this need for workers. Often, when we pray for something, God answers our prayers by using us. Be prepared for God to use you to show another person the way to him.