

(Through the Bible) Matthew 8-9

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith explores the activities and implications of the Kingdom of God as demonstrated through Jesus' miracles in Matthew 8-9.

Duration: 1:18:14

Scripture: Isaiah 35:5-6, Matthew 5:1-12, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 12:31-32, Matthew 13:1-3

Topics: "Jesus Ministry", "Suffering Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts a story from the book of Acts where Paul is being attacked by a mob. The captain of the guard questions Paul about what he said to provoke such a reaction, and Paul defends himself by asserting his Roman citizenship. The speaker then discusses the Roman practice of scourging prisoners to extract confessions, highlighting the suffering Jesus endured before his crucifixion. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the ministry of Jesus and the importance of not confining God to rigid methods or routines.

Transcript

Let's turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8. The fifth chapter of Matthew begins, and seeing the multitude, he went into a mountain, and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them saying. And so we have the great Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. So, in chapter 8, it begins, and when he was come down from the mountain, and so having proclaimed the kingdom of God, and those conditions of the kingdom, those that will dwell within the kingdom, having now come down from the mountain, he begins to show the activities of the kingdom of God, what it will be like during the kingdom age. We read in Isaiah chapter 35 concerning the kingdom age, and it declares how that the deaf will hear, the dumb will be singing praises, the blind will behold the glory of the Lord, and the lame shall leap for joy.

The whole kingdom is a kingdom of a restored age. As you look around the world today, you cannot see God's divine intention when God created the world. When you look at man around you today, you do not see God's intent when he said, let us make man in our image and after our likeness.

Because we look around at a fallen world, and we see fallen man, and we cannot understand God's original intent as we look at the world today, and that's why many people are confused concerning God. How can a God of love allow the things to happen that are happening in our world today, you see? But in reality, the world that you see is a world that is in rebellion against God's law, a rebellion against the

kingdom of God, and it is a world that said, we will not have this man to rule over us. You see a world of men who thought that they knew better than God how to govern themselves, and we are looking now at the tragic byproducts of man's rejecting God's reign over their lives.

But Jesus, when he came, declared again the glorious aspects of the kingdom. And now he begins to demonstrate a foretaste of what it will be in the kingdom. So when he was come down from the mountain, again the multitudes joined.

When he went to the mountain, it was his disciples that came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, the sermon on the mount was not for the multitudes, it was for that intimate few, it was for the disciples. There is no broad worldly application at the present time to the sermon on the mount. There will be in the kingdom age, but there is definite application among his who already are citizens of his kingdom.

In other words, there's an application to us because we are a part of his kingdom where we have already bowed our knee to the king. But once again, having come from the mountain, those multitudes again surround him and follow him. And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him.

Now leprosy was a horrible, loathsome disease in those days. At that time, there was absolutely no cure for leprosy. We now have medicines by which leprosy can be arrested.

It cannot yet be cured, but it can be arrested. They've called it now Hansen's disease in order to get away from the stigma of leprosy. For the word leprosy still sort of creates a revulsion sort of in our minds and, you know, ostracize them, leprosy, and almost a horror and a fear.

So they no longer call it leprosy, but Hansen's disease, naming it after Dr. Hansen, who was first able to isolate the bacillus of leprosy. So this man was a man who had been ostracized from society. A leper had to cry out, unclean, unclean, to cause people not to approach him too closely.

If you were approaching a leper from, say, a downwind position, when you came within a hundred and fifty feet of him, he had to start crying out, unclean, unclean, so that you would not come any closer, except at your own risk. If you were coming from an upwind position, then at 300 feet, he'd have to start crying to you, unclean, unclean, or other way around. But it was a man who was ostracized from society because of this disease.

He came and worshipped Jesus, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Somehow recognizing the power of the King, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, and said, I will be thou clean.

And immediately his leprosy left him. Now here's an interesting thing. Number one, there are those who complain that Jesus violated the law, for it was unlawful to touch a leper.

And that is true. If you touched a leper, you were ceremonially unclean. You could not then come into the temple of God.

It would be like having touched a dead carcass, until you had first of all gone through the ceremonial baths and so forth. But it wasn't, you know, it wasn't that horrible in a violation of law. But the thing is, when Jesus touched him, he was no longer a leper.

So there's a matter of argument there too. But the interesting thing to me is, if you will, and the response of Jesus was, I will. Now there are some people today who object to our praying, Lord, if you will, thy will be done.

I find no problem praying that at all. In fact, I do believe that we make a tragic mistake in assuming or presuming to always know what the will of God is. And to presume that God does will healing in every case is not really scriptural.

Evidently with Paul the apostle, God did not will healing concerning that thorn in the flesh. The minister of Satan that was buffeting him, for three times Paul prayed concerning that. And the Lord finally said, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you.

And thus, when I come to God concerning my own physical needs, I do not see it as a lack of faith. I see it only as great wisdom and tremendous faith and complete commitment of myself to God when I say, Lord, your will be done. I have a difficult time with people who would argue with that or would put that down.

I'm not at all afraid of God's will. In fact, I am afraid of something, anything other than God's will for me. I really don't want to step out of the will of God.

And Paul the apostle said, my desire is that Christ should be glorified in my body, whether by life or death, I don't care. My main concern, just Christ be glorified. Now, I do believe that perhaps in the most or majority of the cases, the Lord will answer, I will be thou clean, but he may not.

And I must be willing to accept whatever he says. Having committed myself completely in his hands, if he says, I will be thou clean, praise the Lord. If he says, well, you know, this is for God's glory that you might just really develop in your own walk and relationship with God, coming to a total trust in him.

There are areas that I want to reveal to you and glories that I want to bring into your life and let you be exalted above major because of this glory that I'm going to bestow upon you. It's really necessary that you experience this weakness of your flesh to be constantly reminded of your human nature, because I'm going to bring you into a dimension and into a realm that is just, you know, so far beyond as well. Praise the Lord, I will be done, you know, and I find no problem with that at all.

But to the leper, Jesus said, I will be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Now Jesus commands him to tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. Now that is interesting to me that even in the law of Moses there was provision for the curing of an incurable disease.

And in the law of Moses it declares, now this is the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. So God made provision in the law for him to do a work that is contrary to nature, that is the healing of leprosy. And so even in the law God made provision for the leper in the day of his cleansing for the miraculous work of God in his life.

And in the day of his cleansing he was to come and to bring this dove, and two of them actually, and one was to be killed, the blood put in a basin, and the other one dipped in the blood and then turned loose, and it was to fly off, and the leper would go through this ceremony of cleansing. It is a beautiful ceremony of just that, you know, whole new freedom in life that you have when God has worked his miraculous power in your life. So the Lord said, go ahead and follow the law, go to the priest and go on through the rite, let the priest examine you, set you in this house for seven days, examine you again, and then proclaim you

clean, and then bring the offering and all.

And the Lord told him, just go ahead and fulfill the law. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, now Capernaum is a little later on called his city. Jesus headquartered in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, and I can understand why.

What a beautiful place. I love Capernaum, just from a ascetic, you know, I love water and I love blue skies and the whole thing, and what, you know, it's just a pretty place. And I can understand why Jesus headquartered there in Capernaum.

He was entered in Capernaum, and there came unto him a centurion beseeching him. Now a centurion was a Roman soldier, the first one that Jesus ministered to was a leper, a man who was outside of society, ostracized because of his disease. The second one he ministers to is a Gentile, one who was outside of the covenant to Israel.

A Roman centurion who came unto him, begging him, saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. And the centurion answered and said, O Lord, I'm not worthy that you should come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.

He probably figured if he took the Lord home, his wife would kill him, you know. She had a chance to get the house ready. So, O Lord, don't come, just, you know, say the word and my servant will be healed.

But notice now, his understanding of authority. I also, for I am a man under authority, let's see, having under, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, go and he goes, and to another come, and he comes, and to my servant do this, and he does it. I understand what authority is about, Lord.

I am a man under authority. I am under authority, and I have soldiers under me. I understand authority.

There's a chain of command in authority. I am under authority, yet I have men under me. No man can rule over man rightly who is not himself ruled.

You see, if you get a man who does not have that sense of I am under authority, be he the President of the United States. If you do not have a man who has that concept, I am under authority, then you've got a tragic situation, and you'll have tyranny. But when I realize that though I have authority, I am still under authority.

I've got to be under that authority of God. No man can really rule who is not under authority, and understands the principles of authority. And so, I am under authority, but I have soldiers who are under me, and I understand what it's all about.

I can say, hey, go, and he goes. Come, and he comes. Lord, I know that you have authority, and all you have to do is speak the word, and my servant will be healed.

You don't have to come to my house. I'm not really worthy of that. You just speak the word.

And when Jesus heard that, he marveled and said unto them that follow. I'll tell you the truth. I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel.

I've never met an Israelite with as much. Here's a fellow coming from the Gentile kingdom, one who is coming from the Roman Empire. He's outside of the covenant of Israel, but here he is demonstrating tremendous faith in Jesus Christ.

Hey, Lord, you don't have to come. Just speak the word. I know what authority is about.

You can just speak the word. And Jesus went on then to predict the glorious work of God's Spirit among the Gentiles. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

The east and the west referring to the Gentile nations. Many will come from out of the Gentiles, sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now it's interesting that when I think about heaven, I usually think of Paul and John and more of the New Testament characters.

I've never really thought too much of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I'm sure that it will be a thrill indeed. But there are so many.

I thought about David. That's going to be a great one to get together with. Elijah and Elisha.

I like those characters. Gideon. But the kingdom of heaven is going to be comprised, Jesus said, of many Gentiles also.

Whereas the children of the kingdom, that is the Jews, will be cast out into outer darkness and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Because of the Jews rejection of Jesus Christ, the glorious good news of God will be carried to the Gentile world. And many will come out of that Gentile world and will become a part of God's glorious kingdom.

Whereas the children of the kingdom, those natural seed of Abraham, because of their rejection of their Messiah, will not enter into the kingdom. And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And the servant was healed in that very hour, that time.

Now the next miracle of Jesus was performed upon a woman who in that particular culture was not respected and esteemed as she is today. During those days, if a woman was pregnant, when she would go into labor, everyone would gather at her home and they'd bring everything for a big party and a celebration. And when the midwife would come out and say, it's a boy, they'd all start celebrating and they have a big party and a great time, a celebration.

If the midwife would come out and say, it's a girl, they'd all pack up their stuff and go home. The first one Jesus touches is a leper, the outcast of society. The second one is a Gentile, an outcast of the covenant.

The third one is a woman who was looked down upon. But you know, Jesus never looked down on anyone, nor did he ever exclude anyone. The kingdom doesn't exclude.

And so, when Jesus was coming to Peter's house, Peter's wife's mother was lying down. She had a fever. And he touched her hand and the fever left her.

And she arose and ministered unto them. That is, she fixed him something to eat, ministered to him in a physical way, food, and waited on him. And when the evening was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils.

And he cast out the spirits with his word. And he healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, when he said, himself took our infirmities and bear our weakness. In the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, as he is prophesying concerning God's servant, the Messiah, he said 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.

Now, there are those Bible scholars today who want to make that apply only to spiritual healing. But really, the finest commentary you have on the Old Testament, is not always those who declare themselves to be Bible scholars today. The finest commentary you have on the Old Testament, is the inspired New Testament.

And here Matthew, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares that the physical healing upon all of these people that were brought to Jesus as he was there in Peter's house in the evening, and as Jesus healed them all, he was doing that, that the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled. So, Matthew extends the prophecy of Isaiah to include physical healing as well as spiritual healing. When we partake of communion, Jesus, when he took the bread, he broke it and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you.

This do in remembrance of me. The question arises, when was his body broken? And we know from the Gospels that it was the body wasn't broken, that is, the bones were not broken. For though the Jews had sought Pilate that they might break the legs of the prisoners to hasten their death, that their bodies would not be hanging on the cross on the Sabbath day, when they came to Jesus, he had already dismissed his spirit, he was already dead.

And they marveled that he was already dead. And they did not break his legs in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Psalm 22, not a bone of him shall be broken.

So, the prophecy was not a bone was to be broken. In fact, as a type of a sacrificial lamb, he could not have broken bones. So, he thrust the spear in the side of Jesus and there came forth blood and water.

But yet Jesus said, this is my body broken for you. He must have been referring to the scourging that he was to receive when they would lay upon his back 39 stripes. It was a form of inquisition, whereby they elicited the confessions of the prisoner.

You remember when Paul, there on the steps of the Antonio fortress, asked the captain if he could speak to the Jews that had been trying to kill him. And he said, go ahead. And Paul began to say, hey, fellows, I know exactly how you feel.

I felt just like you one time. Man, I was really, you know, bent on destroying this new sect of Christianity. And I was actually on my way down to Damascus to imprison those that called upon the name of the Lord, when suddenly there came a light from heaven and I was, you know, lying there on the ground.

And I heard the Lord saying, hey, why do you persecute me? I'm going to call you to the Gentiles. And when Paul said that word Gentiles, man, the Jews got upset. They started throwing dirt in the air.

They started screaming and ranting and tearing their clothes and trying to mob Paul again. And the captain says, get him inside. He'd been talking to the people in the Hebrew tongue.

The captain couldn't understand it. And he said, what did you say to those people got them so upset? He said, examine him by scourging, find out what he said. Paul said, wait a minute.

Is it lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who is not condemned? He said, are you a Roman citizen? He said, you bet I am. The guy said, I bought my citizenship, cost me quite a bit of money. How did you become a citizen? He said, I was free born.

But that was the policy of the Roman government. The third degree, you might say. They lay upon the prisoner, 39 stripes upon his back in order to get him to confess his sins, his crimes, his guilt.

But as a lamb before her shears is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. But there his body was broken. Now it was not just some capricious act of man.

It was a part of God's divine plan. And so we must ask, why would God allow his son to endure such torture and suffering? Isaiah tells us prophetically with his stripes you are healed. Peter quoting Isaiah said, by his stripes you were healed.

Now, as Paul is writing to the Corinthian church concerning the Lord's Supper and their particular abuse of the Lord's Supper, he said unto them that many of them were weak and sick because they did not understand the Lord's body. In other words, he is saying you did not understand what the broken bread really symbolizes. You are eating and drinking of the body of Christ unworthy for this cause.

Many of you are weak and sick because you don't understand the Lord's body. You don't really understand the full significance of the scourging that Jesus received, where he bore our sufferings and our sicknesses. And so people are taking the broken bread not really fully understanding the Lord's body and thus not receiving the full benefits of the work of Jesus Christ for us.

So Matthew broadens that suffering of Christ to include the physical healing and relates it to physical healing, whereas so many today seek to narrow it and isolate it just to spiritual healing. I'm afraid that you do not have a solid strong scriptural basis to try to just make it apply to spiritual healing only, the healing of sin and so forth, but there is also the application for the physical needs of the body. Now when Jesus saw the great multitudes that were about him, he gave a commandment to depart to the other side.

And there was a certain scribe who came and he said unto him, Master, I will follow you wherever you go. He's getting ready to leave and go over the other side of the lake. He said, I'll follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said unto him, the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man doesn't have anywhere to lay his head. In other words, he is saying to this fellow that's coming up on an impulse, and there are a lot of people who impulsively, you know, say, oh, I want to give my life to the Lord. What does it say? Count the cost.

Follow me wherever I go, just count the cost. The foxes have their holes, the birds of the air have their nests, but I don't have any place to lay my head. Now count the cost.

He's not saying, you know, don't follow me. He's just saying, before you jump on board, just consider the cost. Count the cost of discipleship.

Another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first. Now we talked to you about the inconsistencies of speech last week as we were studying the subject of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, when

many will come saying, Lord, Lord. Remember that? How Peter said, not so, Lord, and we said that was a perfect inconsistency of speech.

Here again, an inconsistency of speech. Lord, me first. Uh-uh, it can't be that way.

He's got to be first. Lord, allow me first. No, you've got the wrong idea of the kingdom.

To go and bury my father. You say, oh, wait a minute, that's legitimate, isn't it? Jesus said unto him, follow me and let the dead bury their dead. Put me first, you see.

Now, the chances are, as the fellow's father was in perfect health, this is a common term for procrastination. Hey, I want to do it, but I'm not ready yet. But one of these days.

You know, allow me first to bury my father. Wait a while until my dad dies and, you know, and it's a term of procrastination. And they use that even though the dad was in perfect health and probably had another 20 years.

But one of these days, I'm going to get, you know, I'm going to get on board. Just suffer me first. Take a little time.

The Lord is speaking against procrastination. The idea of putting him first. Follow me.

Let the dead bury their dead. So when he had entered into the ship and his disciples followed him, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with waves. But he was asleep.

Now, this isn't the first time and the only experience of a tremendous storm that arose on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus got in this little boat. And up at that north end of the lake, these common, it is a common thing to have these storms, these squalls come up through the valley. There that comes from the area of Haifa.

There is this there's this valley that comes through there and you'll get these tremendous winds that will just come up suddenly. And I've watched the Sea of Galilee go from just a glassy calm, wow, what great water skiing, to tremendous waves that will just, waves can get nine, ten feet high there in the Sea of Galilee in these sudden squalls that will rise as the wind comes whistling up this, the Kinnereth Valley there. And so, this isn't the only occasion that this happened.

Now, it would seem that Satan is perhaps behind the whole thing trying to destroy Jesus. There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch the ship was covered with waves, but he was asleep. And Jesus had a common practice of sleeping when he got on the boat.

And his disciples came unto him and awoke him saying, Lord, save us, we perish. And he said unto them, why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and he rebuked the winds in the sea and there was a great calm. But the men marveled saying, what manner of man is this that even the winds in the sea obey him? So Jesus showed his mastery over the elements.

One of the other Gospels in telling us this story tells us that Jesus said to his disciples, let us go over to Gennesaret. Now, that's probably why he rebuked them for having a little faith, that they were fearful they were going to go under. He said, let's go over.

When Jesus said, let's go over, there's no way you can go under. So when they woke him up and said, Lord, don't you care we perish, he rebuked. He said, where's your faith? Did you hear me say, let's go over to Gennesaret? Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? And so, when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesnes, the Gergesnes actually, there met him two that were possessed with devil.

The other Gospels tell us of the one who was probably more prominent than the other. And they were coming out of the tombs and they were exceeding fierce so that no man dared to pass by that way. Incidentally, just recently, the archaeologists have discovered that city over there on the other side of Gennesaret.

And it's quite exciting that as they were building a new road to go up into the Golan, they began to uncover this city. And so, they actually moved the road up a little ways so that they could then go into their archaeological exploration of this city. So, now we can point with pretty much certainty the very cliff that the swine ran down into the sea because we have now discovered the city of Gennesaret over there on the other side.

And so, these men possessed with devils, plural, who were living there in the tombs. And they cried out saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Are you come hither to torment us before the time? Number one, the demons possessing these men recognized who Jesus was and acknowledged who he was. What have we to do with you, Jesus, thou Son of God? You remember James said, You say you believe God? You think that's something big? Hey, the devils believe.

And notice here, they're sort of fear and trembling in the presence of Jesus. They said, Are you come here to torment us before our time? Now, they know that their time is coming. They're aware of that.

They know that he has authority and power over them. They recognize that. And it's important that we also recognize greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

We are in a spiritual battle, but we need not to be fearful of the enemy because of that greater power of God's Spirit resident within us. And so there was a good way off from them, a herd of many swine feeding. Now, that was an illegal occupation and industry in Israel.

It was unlawful for them, according to the law of Moses, to be raising swine, to have swine, to eat pork. So the devils besought him saying, If you cast us out, allow us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go.

And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine. And behold, the whole herd of swine ran back, ran violently down a steep place into the sea and they perished in the waters. There's only about one steep place that leads into the Sea of Galilee.

And it's a few miles away from the city of Gennesaret that has been discovered. Now, there are evil spirits that can take possession of human bodies and can control the motor functions of a human body. Jesus himself set free many people who were possessed by these evil entities, spirits.

When he sent his disciples out, which we will get to, he gave them power to cast out these devils. When a person's body is invaded by one of these evil spirits, they often lose control of their own faculties. And these evil spirits are able to actually speak right through that individual.

This is not something that is just superstition and a part of a superstition of an ancient culture. But there are quite a few documented experiences of the activity of these types of spirits. Even today, there is a book by Moody Press entitled *Demon Experiences in Many Lands*, which is a compilation of the witness of missionaries from different parts of the world and experiences that they have had with these evil spirit entities.

Perhaps one of the most classic modern-day experiences is that of the girl whose name was Clarissa, who back in 1947, there in the Philippines, had the unusual phenomena of going into these fits where when she would come out of them, would have these bite marks all over her body. Places where it was impossible for her to bite herself on the back of the shoulder, upon the back of her neck and all. And blood would be drawn.

They put her in the Billabib prison there for her own protection. And the greatest psychiatrists of the Philippines were brought by the mayor of Manila to psychoanalyze and to find out what was going on. And they came up with, you know, no explanation and no help.

Finally, they called for a couple of missionaries, Bob McAllister and Lester Summerall. And Lester Summerall has written a book entitled *Bitten by Demons* of the story of Clarissa. Actually, *Life* magazine got hold of the thing and did a special on it, showing pictures of her and all and of these bite marks on her.

And it was quite an interesting thing to the world of psychology and all at that time. But nonetheless, through the ministry of Bob McAllister and Lester Summerall, the girl was delivered from these demons. And Clarissa accepted Jesus Christ.

And it's quite an interesting story. It's one that you don't want to read before you go to bed. They recognized Jesus.

They acknowledged his authority over them. They acknowledged their day is coming. It would appear that they do take some comfort in inhabiting a body, that they do not like to be unembodied spirits, but they do like to take residence in a body.

Now, Jesus said when an evil spirit is cast out of a man, it goes through wilderness places looking for a place to inhabit, a house to inhabit. And if it finds none, it'll come back to the house from which it was driven. And if it finds it all clean, swept, and garnished, it'll go out and get seven others, say, hey, you got a neat place to live, you know, and bring them in.

And thus, the last estate of a person becomes worse than his first. It's an area that I don't relish. I don't like.

I keep as far away from it as I can. But there are times when we have had to exercise these evil spirits. And it's a very difficult and uncomfortable ministry of which I really have no real liking at all.

So, they begged Jesus' permission to go into these swine. And when they had entered the herd of swine, they ran down this steep place and perished in the water, so that those who were keeping the swine fled. And they went their way to the city and they told everything that was befallen to those men who were possessed by these devils.

And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. To hear him? To receive him? No. When they saw him, they begged him that he would leave their coast.

Hey, you're upsetting our industry. You've just wiped out our profit. Get out of here.

They were more interested in their own profit than they were the sad welfare of these two men. But it's a sad thing that people would ask the Lord to depart. But such is often the case today.

You upset my plans. And so he entered into a ship and he passed over and he came to his own city. His own city being Capernaum.

I told you that was his headquarters. And behold, they brought to him a man who was sick of the palsy, lying on a bed. And Jesus, when he saw their faith, said to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer.

Thy sins are forgiven thee. Now I can imagine that that was a tremendous disappointment to his friends. I'm certain that they had in their mind Jesus healing the guy, so he could get out of his bed and walk.

And for Jesus to say, Son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven. That probably was disappointing to them.

It maybe was even disappointing to the guy lying there. But in reality, Jesus was giving him the greater gift first. Really, it is more important that your sins be forgiven than you be healed of your ailments.

What is more important than our salvation? Nothing. My healing is not as important as my salvation. The greatest miracle God has wrought in my life is my miracle of salvation, the forgiveness of my sins.

That's God's greatest miracle in my life. The rest is really nothing compared to that great miracle of God. Sometimes people tragically say, Oh, God's never really done any miracle in my life.

Well, are you born again? Yeah. Well, hey, hey, hey. That's the greatest thing that God can do for you.

The rest is really very simple when you consider the first thing that God has done. Son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven.

Oh, how we so often misunderstand because you see, we place a greater emphasis upon the material than we do the spiritual realm. Jesus was constantly showing that the most important realm is the spiritual realm and the material is inferior to the spiritual. And so Jesus takes first things first, the spiritual realm.

Son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven. However, there were certain scribes within themselves.

When they heard that, they said, Oh, that's blasphemy. And so Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? Would he say that to you if he knew your thoughts? Why do you think evil in your hearts? Well, he does know your thoughts. He knows what's in the heart of man.

Then he said, What is easier to say? Your sins be forgiven thee or to say, arise and walk. Now, as far as saying, it's easier to say your sins be forgiven you because who can tell, you know, immediately what's happened. If you say arise and walk, that's really harder to say because, hey, if the guy doesn't arise and walk, you say, hey, he doesn't have anything.

You see, the arising and walk can bring an immediate demonstration of whether or not there's any power in what you've said. And he immediately puts it on the line because now we can have a physical demonstration to either prove or disprove the power of your word. So what is easier to say? Your sins be forgiven or arise and walk? Well, it's a lot easier to say your sins be forgiven, but that you may know that I

have power on earth to forgive sins.

In other words, I'll give to you a demonstration of the power of my word that you may know that I have the power to forgive sins because you can't see that. That's a spiritual work within, but we'll give you some physical evidence. He said to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up your bed and go home.

And he arose and went home. And when the multitude saw it, they marveled and they glorified God. Notice, they marveled and they glorified God.

Jesus said, let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they will glorify your father, which is in heaven. And so he did it in such a way as it brought glory to God. And as Jesus passed forth from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs.

Matthew was a tax gatherer. He was a customs official. Capernaum was one of those cities where they had established a customs for those coming from the area of the north down through the valley in the Golan and around the Sea of Galilee, catching them there as they were bringing their goods and charging custom.

And Jesus said unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed Jesus. And it came to pass as Jesus was sitting at meat in the house.

Behold, there were many publicans and sinners. And they came and sat down with him and his disciples. Open house.

It's a lot of publicans and sinners. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, why is your master eating with publicans and sinners? In that culture, eating with people was extremely significant. They had enculturated with them the concept that to eat with someone is to become one with that person.

Because we take a loaf of bread and I hold it out to you and you grab a piece off and you start eating it. I pull off a piece and I start eating it. We are both of us eating from the same loaf of bread.

As I am eating from that loaf of bread, it is now going in and being assimilated by my body and it's becoming a part of my body. As you are eating your piece of bread, you are assimilating it and it's becoming a part of your body. And thus, in a mystical way, we are becoming a part of each other.

I'm becoming one with you because the bread that is nourishing me and becoming a part of me is also nourishing you and becoming a part of you. So you would never eat with anyone unless you wanted to be identified with that person and becoming one with them. That's why they were shocked that Jesus would eat with sinners and with publicans.

You mean you would become one with a sinner? You would be identified with a sinner? Yes, he was identified with the sinners in order that they might identify with him and receive his power and his forgiveness. And so they came to the disciples and questioned them, how come? And Jesus, when he heard that, said unto them, those that are whole don't need the physician, but those that are sick. But go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.

Now in the book of Hosea, the Lord talking to Israel said, look, I want mercy, not sacrifice. I want you to start showing mercy. I'd rather you show mercy than offer sacrifices to me.

And so Jesus is quoting them one of their scriptures out of Hosea and he says, go and learn what that means. When the Lord said, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For Jesus said, I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Then he came to his disciples, then came to him the disciples of John and they said, why is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples don't fast? And Jesus said unto them, can the children of the bride chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then they shall fast. So while Jesus was with his disciples was not the time for fasting, the days will come when I will be gone, when I will leave. And those will be the days when they can fast.

And then Jesus talks about really the worthlessness of reformation. No man puts a piece of new cloth onto an old garment. For that which is put in to fill it up will take from the garment and the tear is made worse.

Now in those days they didn't have samphorized materials, pre-shrunk materials. And so if you would take an old garment that had been washed many times and you would sew a new patch into that old garment, the new patch would not have yet been shrunk. And so the first time you would wash the garment, that new patch you put in would shrink and just would rip out the, make the tear worse.

And so Jesus is saying, look, you don't try and patch up the old garment with new material. You don't put new wine in old skins. The new wine will burst the old skins.

But you get new skins. Now, basically Jesus is talking against the religious systems that were established at that time and there's no reforming of them. I haven't really come to reform Judaism, to sew a new piece of cloth into this old garment or to put new wine in these old skins.

I do believe that there is also an application to this in the present times. I do believe that when God is desiring to do a fresh work, that God oftentimes has to go outside of the boundaries of the organized religious systems. I really don't know in history where we have any record of a true revival in a denominational group.

Usually the great revivals ultimated in a whole new denomination being formed. It seems like the old skins get set. And so we see this marvelous work of God here.

But it is my personal conviction that God had to sort of raise up new skins for the work that he was wanting to do. And so I found myself personally in that frustrating position for many years of trying to put the new wine into the old skins. And I was just ripping things apart.

I was known as a rebel and as a nonconformist and every other thing that they could say. Because I couldn't see going along with just the traditional things of the denomination. Why don't we just get back to the word and follow the word of God? And it seems simple enough, but the old skins just can't handle it.

They're already set in their ways. There are many people today who are still involved in the process of carefully pouring the new wine in the old skins, always trying to pour it in in such a way that we don't split them, don't burst them. But ultimately, people come to the conclusion that it's not an easy thing to do.

If it is at all possible. Now, while he spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshiped him saying, my daughter is even now dead. But come and lay your hand on her and she shall live.

Say this fellow was understandably very desperate at this point. But look at this tremendous faith. Worshipping Jesus, he said, look, my daughter is dead, but I know if you'll come and lay your hand on her, she'll live.

And Jesus arose and followed him and so did his disciples. And behold, there was a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood for 12 years. And she came up behind him and touched the hem of his garment.

For she said within herself, if I may, but touch his garment, I shall be whole. And Jesus turned him about. And when he saw her, he said, daughter, be of good comfort.

Your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. Now I want to point out something that I feel is very important and very significant in this.

And that is that this woman had set a point of contact for the releasing of her faith. Now, I think that many times we have faith that God is able to do a particular thing, but we never come to the place of actuating that faith. And I do believe that there is a value of actuating faith.

And it's important to actuate faith. It's more than just, well, I know God can do it. Well, yes, I believe the Lord can do it.

It is, I believe the Lord is doing it or the Lord will do it now or that point when I am really actuating then the faith that I have. Now, this woman in her mind had set a point to actuate her faith. That point being the moment I touch the hem of his garment, I know I'm going to be healed.

So that having set the point for the actuating of her faith, the moment she touched his garment, she actuated her faith and in that moment she was healed. Now, I think that herein lies the value of having the elders lay hands on you. As the Bible tells us, if there are any sick among you, let them call for the elders of the church and let them lay hands on them, anoint them in the oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of faith will save the sick.

I think that that laying out of hands is a tremendous place for the actuating of faith. I know that when I'm anointed with oil and the elders lay hands on me, God is going to heal me because he's promised to and that it gives a point for the actuating of a person's faith. As soon as they lay hands, I know God's going to heal me, you know.

Jesus realizing that the miracle had been wrought, turned to her and he said, be a good cheer. Your faith, not my faith, your faith has made you whole. And the woman was healed in that very hour.

And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, he saw the minstrels and the people making noise. It is a custom many times in more in pagan lands, when someone is very sick or dying to gather together a great crowd for making a lot of noise, minstrels and so forth to make a lot of noise to drive the evil spirits away. Jesus said unto them, move aside for the maid is not dead, she's only sleeping.

And they left him to scorn. But when the people were put out, he went in and took her by the hand and she arose. And the fame went abroad into all that land.

And when Jesus departed from there, there were two blind men who followed him crying and saying, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was coming to the house, the blind men came to him and

Jesus said unto them, do you believe that I'm able to do this? And they said unto him, yes, Lord. And he touched their eyes saying, according to your faith, be it unto you.

And their eyes were opened and Jesus straightly charged them saying, don't let any man know this. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. And as they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man who was possessed with the devil.

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke and the multitudes marveled saying, it was never like this in Israel. But the Pharisees said he is casting out devils through the prince of devils. Notice that because we'll be getting to that in a few moments as we move on and deal with the unpardonable sin.

They're beginning to get close. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. And when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is truly plenteous, but the labors are few. Pray therefore, the Lord of harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest. And so the ministry of Jesus and notice how that Jesus does not formulate a pattern.

How often we are trying to formulate patterns for God. Define the circles in which God can move and develop the methods and develop the means. And we get all of these little sort of canned approaches to dealing with a problem.

Let's see, what is your problem? Yeah, that's solution number 17. Let's see here, you know, and you know, number 1, 2, 3, 4. We go down this little, you know, routine. We so like to routine God.

Put him in a box, confine him to a method. And especially if that method has worked at one time. And I'm guilty of this.

I know that, you know, you think now, what did I do? You know, it worked that time. Now, what did I do that was different? You know, you try and get the same feeling or whatever, you know, as though it was something to do with me rather than God's divine sovereign work. And so with some, Jesus challenged their faith.

But surely, this little girl that was dead didn't have any faith. And you can't say, well, it was her faith in Jesus. But immediately afterwards, with the two blind men, he said, do you believe that I can do this? They said, oh, yes, Lord.

He said, well, according to your faith, be it done. And their eyes were open. The woman who had this hemorrhaging condition said, I can just touch his garment.

And he said, woman, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you whole. Her faith.

So, you see, there's no patterned way of God's working in a person's life. But when someone has the same thing that we have, we go and we say, now, how did it happen? Well, you know, what did you do? And, you know, I want to learn the formula. I want to learn this little secret way so that I can follow, you know.

But the Lord doesn't confine himself to a routine or to a pattern, but he's diverse, as we are diverse. And he deals with each of us according to our own diverse need. And I love the Lord for his beautiful adaptability in being able to minister to me according to my own personality and my own need.

God is so glorious because I relate to him in such a personal way. He understands my own individual quirks and characteristics. And he understands me and loves me just like I am.

And he deals with me according to my own personality and all. And thus, he deals with each of us on that individual basis. And it is wrong for us to attempt to pattern God to, you know, well, this is the way he did it for me, you know.

And so, if he doesn't do it for you that way, well, then, hey, you, you know, don't quite have it, you know, if it wasn't done to you, just like it's done for me. And so, you form your denomination and I'll form mine. And we'll, you know, in the lepers.

Another time, there were 10 lepers that came to him. Jesus didn't touch him. He just said, go your way.

Show yourself to the priest. So, if they got together with this one that we read about tonight, oh, you mean he didn't touch you? Well, you didn't get it like I did, man. He touched me.

You can't belong to my church. I'm of the touch me church. Well, we're of the touch me notes.

Yes, there is room for variety. As much diversity and variety as we have in people here tonight, for God to work in our lives. Don't try to pattern God.

Don't try to look for the same experience that someone had. You just relate to God in your own personal, unique way. And God will relate to you in a very personal, unique way.

And you'll have your own special walk and experience and relationship with God. So, oftentimes, we feel, well, you know, they said that this happened. No, it hasn't happened to me.

And no, you know, I don't have it, I guess, because it didn't happen to me like it happened to them. The methods by which God works in our lives are infinite in their varieties. Well, we got two chapters.

We're improving. That's 100%. Next week, we'll start at 10.

Who knows? We'll try and take 10, 11, and 12. I want to get into the parables and spend time in the kingdom parables, which begin in chapter 13. And that's not a good place to start.

I mean, that's not a good place to come into. At the end of a study, it's a place to start. So, we'll just aim for 10, 11, and 12 next week.

And so, there's a lot in that. And especially, I want to spend some time on an issue that a lot of people have difficulty with, and that's the unpardonable sin that Jesus brings out in our study next week, chapter 12. Shall we stand? We are so grateful for the marvelous work of God's love and his spirit within our lives, overwhelmed daily with the goodness and the blessings of God.

God is so good. It's such a privilege being here with you. I thank God for this privilege.

Every once in a while, I have a nightmare that I'm pastoring someplace else. Man, I'm so glad when I wake up in the morning. There's no place I'd rather be than just right here, because of God's glorious work and

the witness from this place that's going out to the world.

May the Lord bless you, continue to bless you. May the Lord's hand be upon your life this week. May you experience God's power working in your life in a very special way.

May you be enriched in all things in Christ Jesus. May you experience a time of growth this week as the Lord draws you into closer fellowship with himself, in Jesus' name.

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