

The Gospel of Matthew
Week Nine
Matthew 8:14-9:8

Day One

14 When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. 15 He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. 16 When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

v. 14 – First, Jesus healed a leper. Then He healed the centurion’s servant of paralysis. For this third healing, Jesus came to Peter’s home and found Peter’s mother-in-law sick with a fever. Matthew did not include the story of Jesus calling Peter to be with Him, which tells us that Matthew’s gospel isn’t chronological. At this point Matthew was demonstrating that Jesus had the power to heal and was grouping his stories according to the theme. It is interesting that Matthew first showed Jesus to be an extraordinary teacher in Matthew 5 through 7, then showed Him to be an extraordinary healer.

v. 15 – Once again, Jesus proved that He was like no other leader in Israel. He first touched a leper and now touched a woman, both potentially “contaminating” acts, according to Jewish custom. When He touched the woman, she was instantly cured, just like the previous two cases we saw. There need be no “healing process” for those whom God heals, but rather an instantaneous return to normal health.

Notice what the woman did: she got up and waited on Jesus. When God touches you, it isn’t always to return to business-as-usual. It is to refocus your effort on serving Him, the source of your healing and health. **Are you up and waiting on Him, acknowledging that you were once sick with sin but now forgiven and healed?**

v. 16 – After Matthew gave three examples of Jesus’ healing ministry, he then showed Jesus healing anyone who was brought to Him. Matthew pointed out that Jesus had particular “success” with those who were demon-possessed. Once again Matthew was proving to his Jewish readers that Jesus was indeed God, for He had authority over conditions that no human could regularly cure – leprosy, paralysis, healing from a distance, simple fevers and diseases with demonic sources. A Jew could not simply conclude from these accounts that Jesus was a good man, with a special connection to God. A Jew could and should have come to the conclusion that Jesus was (and is) God.

v. 17 – Matthew gave the biblical evidence that a Jew would have required to substantiate the point that Jesus was the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament. While Matthew only quoted one verse, it was quite common for a Jew to quote one part of a passage that would call to mind the entire passage for the reader or listener. In this

instance, Matthew quoted Isaiah 53:4, which is a well-known passage describing the Messiah:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth (Isaiah 53:1-7).

Day Two

18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." 21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

v. 18 – The Sea of Galilee, the lake referred to here, is a huge lake that was surrounded by fishing towns in Jesus' day. I would imagine that the crowds became large and unmanageable due to the healing that Jesus had done, so it was time to move to another venue. The people had to come from all around for their to be a sizeable crowd, for this towns were just villages and not large.

It's sometimes hard to let go of something that is going well. Jesus was having success and crowds were coming, but He pulled out and went someplace else. **Are you facing a change that is hard, not because it's going poorly, but things are going well? Yet you still sense that it's time to move on? If so, can you use this example to help plan your transition, just like Jesus did?**

vs. 19&20 – This is an interesting comment and response from Jesus. A teacher of the law said that he was willing to follow Jesus wherever He led. **I wonder if Jesus was indicating that the man did not fully understand what he was saying, for Jesus was going to lead that man away from the very law that he loved to teach?** The man thought he understood that the destination he had in mind was within Judaism. Jesus was going to lead anyone who followed to places that did not yet exist spiritually.

Perhaps Jesus was trying to tell the man that He did not have a destination, a specific place in mind to lead anyone. Rather, Jesus would lead His followers to the Father and

that was not a destination but a relationship. Don't be too quick to declare the words of the old hymn, "Where You lead me, I will follow." I'm not telling you that you should never say this; I am saying that you should not say it unless you mean it, because God is listening.

vs. 21&22 – Another person seemed to make a reasonable request to go home and bury his father. The problem was that the father probably wasn't dead. The man was asking Jesus permission to take care of matters at home and then he would be glad to follow Jesus. The man's father could have lived for another 20 years! On the surface, the man appeared to be noble and God-loving; in reality, he was delaying his obedience to a more convenient time, a time when his family would not be there to judge or oppose his decision.

What about you? Are you saying one thing but meaning another? It seems that both these examples were doing just that, indicating that their commitment to follow was more radical than it really was. One was bound by the law, the other tied to family loyalties. Jesus urged them both to pursue life and let the dead – tradition and the law – take care of the dead.

That is good advice. **Where are you still bound to tradition or relationships? How is that hindering you from following Jesus?** Don't answer too quickly.

Day Three

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" 26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

v. 23 – Not only was it time to change venues, but Jesus had a teaching lesson prepared for the men as they traveled to the other side of the lake. Notice that the disciples were about to enter a storm and the only thing they did was follow Jesus! **Are you in a storm?** Don't be fearful or surprised:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name (1 Peter 4:12-16).

vs. 24-26 – What a picture of confidence and peace! Jesus was sleeping while the waves overwhelmed the boat. **What does this tell us about Jesus?** 1) Jesus was fully human; 2) He was exhausted from His ministry encounters; 3) Jesus had complete confidence in

the Father; 4) there was no need for Him to stay awake on watch because God had everything under control; 5) Jesus was God; and 6) He had authority and eventually spoke to the waves and wind and they subsided.

What does this tell us about the disciples? 1) They were afraid; 2) these were seasoned fishermen, but the power of the weather frightened them; 3) they knew that Jesus could help them, since they went straight to Jesus with their “prayer request;” 4) they did not have confidence like Jesus; and 5) their fear had caused their faith to dissipate.

My finances are a bit low right now, but I refuse to panic like I have in the past. They aren't really low; I'm just stepping out to publish, broadcast and innovate, all of which cost money. This is my daily prayer: *I trust You, Lord. I will sleep while You watch and work. I will remember the exhortation in the psalms:*

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves (Psalm 127:1-2).

Are you aware that God provides for you, even while you sleep? Is this truth evident in your daily life, your thoughts, your actions?

Day Four

27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" 28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. 29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" 30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. 31 The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

v. 27 – The men who beheld the wind and waves obey Jesus declared wonder at His ability to calm the seas. Little did they know that event was leading to an even more impressive encounter with the men who had a legion of demons. There is no waste in the “economy” of God. He will lead you through some things that seem difficult and perhaps without purpose. Then later you will encounter another problem or situation for which you find yourself prepared because of the previous situation you went through. God knows how to lead His people, both individually and corporately, to situations that will prove His faithfulness and enable them to confront even greater challenges.

v. 28 – Jesus had ordered the men to the other side of the lake so they could meet these two violent men. Everyone else steered clear of those two, but not Jesus. He took His disciples straight to where these demon-possessed men lived. These men weren't just foul-mouthed or uncouth; they were violent. Their internal demons influenced them to do physical harm to any passers by. There are some people whose problems can only be understood and solved when those problems are understood spiritually. Medication could

have helped these men, if medicine existed then that could have helped control their brain functions. That medicine, however, would not have solved their spiritual problem. It would simply have disabled their physical response to their spiritual problems. It is like controlling the seizures for someone; it doesn't really get to the source of the problem, it just disarms the physical response to the problem.

v. 29 – These men knew who Jesus was, referring to Him as the Son of God. **How did they know, when so many in Israel, including the leaders, didn't know who Jesus was? Did the demons somehow reveal this to them, for the demons did declare Jesus to be the Son of God?** As the conversation progressed, it seems like it was the demons speaking with one collective voice.

The demons knew that there was an appointed time when they would be thrown into the lake of fire and suffer there for all eternity. They also knew that the time for this eventuality had not yet come, so they were curious as to why Jesus had come to meet with them.

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-15).

We ignore the reality of the spirit world to our detriment. That world does indeed exist and has power, order and intelligence. Yet I am not awed by that world, not do I cower before its spiritual power, for I have put my trust in Jesus. Someone once said that one drop of Jesus' blood has more power than all the host of evil. I put my trust in Him to protect me from the work of the evil one and his cohorts.

vs. 30&31 – The demons recognized that a herd of unclean pigs were grazing nearby. I think this is the only instance I have ever heard of where someone just didn't own a few pigs, but a herd made up of thousands of pigs. Who tended these animals? I suppose they were called pig shepherds. At any rate, the demons requested permission to go into the pigs and inhabit their bodies if they could not stay in the man. These demons knew that Jesus had come to cast them out. We don't see that Jesus said as much, but the demons knew they were inhabiting a domain that was no longer theirs. **Have you ever**

been with someone and they are nervous around you and they don't know why, and you may not know either? Could it be that the person has some demonic activity in his or her life and the demons are reacting to God's presence in you? Is that possible? What can you do about it? What changes can you make as you relate to that person?

The demons needed permission to go into the pigs; they could not simply go themselves. Even the demons are under God's authority, as we learn in Job:

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:6-12).

Day Five

32 He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. 33 Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

v. 32 – Jesus commanded them to go and they went, entering the pigs. What happened next gives an indication of the torment and evil that those two men had endured, for the pigs rushed down the hill only to drown in the water. The demonic herd so overwhelmed the pig herd that they pigs rushed to commit suicide!

Is there a problem you are facing that you will not overcome until you face its demonic source? When I was a pastor, I realized that I was trying to counsel demons! Some people would come to me with ongoing problems that would never respond to my words. I had to help see those people free. Then they could be in a place to receive counsel and effect change.

v. 33 – **Can you imagine what the pig herders must have thought as spectators of this event?** I am not sure they heard what Jesus said or saw what He did. All they knew was that their livelihood went rushing down a hill and drowned in the water. What a sight that must have been! How bizarre! I doubt if any one of those pig herders had ever seen anything like that. You must be prepared for some strange activity if and when you confront the demonic world. There is screaming and other unusual behavior, but the

results of seeing people free are worth it. While the behavior may be strange, there is nothing to fear. God is in control as we see in this story. Demons may misbehave but they are still under the authority of God Himself.

The herders went into the local town to report the event. So perhaps they did see and hear all that had transpired and went to tell their fellow citizens. Rather than be excited at this event, the people were terrified and asked Jesus to leave! Jesus' stay on that side of the lake was short, not because He had done anything wrong, but because He had done something right.

These people were more concerned about their pig herd than they were about the two men. They were sad for the economic loss of the pigs instead of happy for the restoration of peace in their region. The residents could now pass by that area without fear for their lives, but this meant little to them since they had encountered such an economic loss.

There are times when the presence of God is bad for business. Later in Acts, we see that business for the silversmiths suffered in Ephesus when Paul preached Jesus. The smiths turned violent. Eventually, Jesus was bad for Jewish business at the Temple, which is perhaps one of the reasons the leaders decided that He must die.

What is your priority, helping people or doing business? What price are you willing to pay to see people helped and set free? The local residents could have asked Jesus if there was any way to restore their pig herd. They could have asked Him to stay and preach, helping others in their midst who were tormented by evil. Yet they did not. They simply asked Jesus to leave. Without any fanfare or complaint, Jesus did withdraw, having achieved the purpose for which He came, risking His life in a severe storm to get there.

Day Six

9:1 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. 2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" 4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?"

9:1 – So Jesus and His disciples came back to Capernaum, which is on the north shore of the lake. Being back on friendly ground, He was immediately immersed in the needs of the residents, providing a contrast to the region of Gadarenes where He had just been. The people in Capernaum sought His help for their families and friends. The people of the Gadarenes just wanted Him to go away and quickly. I suppose things are still the same. There are some who want God to leave them alone and there are others who want God's help. Then there is a third group that wants to follow God. **Into which group do you belong?**

I think this is a graphic picture of what Jesus said earlier in Matthew: “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces (Matthew 7:6). Jesus did not insist on staying where He was not welcome. There was plenty of work to do elsewhere, so He accepted that fact and moved on. **Is it time that you did the same in area of your life and work?**

v. 2 – We studied this story last year when we looked at Mark’s gospel, but the lessons bear repeating. 1) These men brought a man to Jesus who could not bring himself because he was paralyzed 2) there are times when your faith has to operate for others when their faith cannot even help them; 3) Jesus “saw” their faith when they did something with their faith that made it evident.

What are you doing that makes your faith evident to others? What can you do to impress God with your faith, just as Jesus was impressed here? After that, Jesus forgave the paralyzed man’s sins, even though that isn’t what he asked for or the men who brought him expected. God knows the root cause of every problem. We should always want to deal with root causes and not just symptoms. No one can know root causes like God, because God knows and sees the heart.

vs. 3&4 – Some onlookers were thinking to themselves that Jesus was blaspheming by forgiving sins, but said nothing. They didn’t have to say anything, for Jesus knew their thoughts. He was (and is) God! He knew what they were thinking; they could not hide:

If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart? (Psalm 44:20-21).

Jesus asked them why they were thinking like they were. You *can* control what you think, but you must work at doing so. You are not a passive victim of your thought life. You can and must wage war to bring your thoughts captive to God’s way of thinking:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

What kind of thoughts are you entertaining? What are you doing to improve your thought life, to bring it more in alignment with the thoughts Jesus would have? In what areas does your mind need improving? Are your thoughts of faith or unfaith?

Day Seven

5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And 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 men.

vs. 5-7 – Jesus implied that the source of His “power” to heal was the same source that enabled Him to forgive sins. In other words, In other words, Jesus was implying that He is God. Jesus also implied that sin can cause disease – if not specific sins then at least the sin condition into which each human is born. Jesus wanted to prove to those grumbling that He had the authority to forgive sins, so He commanded the man to get up and go home.

When the grumblers saw the man do that, they should have jumped up and down with joy. It meant they would no longer have to go through tedious Temple rituals to have their sins forgiven. They could come to Jesus to have that taken care of. Of course this did not happen. What did happen, however, was that the man followed Jesus’ command, picked up his mat and went home, no longer paralyzed! That man received a double blessing that day – his sins were forgiven and he was healed.

v. 8 – This verse reports a trend that would increasingly occur throughout Jesus’ ministry. The people would understand that He was at least a great prophet if not the Holy One Himself. The leaders would have no such understanding. This leads me to the conclusion that leaders are *not* necessarily more spiritual than anyone else. God has simply called them to lead. They will and should have additional wisdom to lead, but that doesn’t mean that they automatically have more in or for every situation.

The people here praised God because Jesus had such authority. The leaders were jealous and plotted His death. **Who was more spiritual in that scenario?** It was the people!

I urge you not to surrender the sovereignty in your life that belongs to God alone. I also urge you not to dismiss what you sense or think just because someone who is reputed to be a leader disagrees with you. Listen to them, but hold a healthy skepticism of their opinion until God clarifies it for you. They may be correct, but then again, they may be wrong, just like the leaders were incorrect and the people correct in this instance.

Have you already surrendered what you sensed to be true and “right” for you to the opinion of someone else? Do you the danger in this? What are you prepared to do to correct that situation?