

Ministry of Grace

Matthew 9

The Healing of the Paralytic

Matthew 9:1-8

¹And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. ²And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." ³And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." ⁴But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ⁶But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he then said to the paralytic--"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." ⁷And he rose and went home. ⁸When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Mark 2:1-12 – ¹And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the paralytic-- ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹²And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Luke 5:17-26 – ¹⁷On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, ¹⁹but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. ²⁰And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ²²When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the man who was paralyzed--"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." ²⁵And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶And

amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

Notes on the miraculous healing of a paralytic

This paralyzed man was brought to Jesus by his friends. It was not the faith of the paralyzed man that Jesus noticed. It was the faith of his friends. These friends were demonstrating true love for their neighbor. They were more interested in their friend's healing than they were in their own inconvenience. Not only were they willing to carry this man to where Jesus was, but they were willing to carry him up to the roof and lower him down into Jesus' presence. *I wonder who paid for the repairs to the roof?*

Jesus did not immediately heal the man's physical malady. First, he dealt with the man's sin problem. We don't know for a fact that it was the sin that caused the paralysis, so why did Jesus forgive his sins before healing him? It appears that He did this so that He could demonstrate to the Pharisees and the others who were present that He was, in fact, the Messiah and that He had the power (authority) to forgive sins.

The surprising thing is that neither the Pharisees, nor the man who was healed (nor the crowd of people witnessing the miracle), recognized that the Messiah (the Son of God) was in their midst. The Pharisees were so focused on legalism and on what they perceived as blasphemy that they missed both the man's faith and their Messiah. The people in the crowd recognized that it was God who performed the miracle (they glorified God), but they did not recognize the Messiah.

The Calling of Matthew

Matthew 9:9

⁹As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

Mark 2:14 – ¹⁴And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

Luke 5:27,28 – ²⁷After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

Notes on the call of Matthew

This verse, as well as those that follow, form an interlude in between miracles that focuses on discipleship. The first part of discipleship is the calling. From reading the gospel accounts, we see that only those who were called became true disciples. But not all who were called became followers (as we saw in the Matthew chapter eight). Those who did follow were willing to leave everything else behind in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. (Luke 5:28)

There is always a cost to discipleship. For some, it's forsaking old friends and their lifestyle, for others it is giving up bad habits, for some it may even be giving up a job or a position and the amenities that go with it. Anyone who is not willing to give up all to follow Jesus is not really willing to follow Him.

Jesus & His Disciples Eat With Sinners

Matthew 9:10-13

¹⁰And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2:15-17 – ¹⁵And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke 5:29-32 – ²⁹And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. ³⁰And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Notes on Discipleship

Why were there so many tax collectors at this dinner? Many of them were probably acquaintances of Matthew and he may have invited them to meet Jesus. The tax collectors were hated by the other Jews because they were seen as traitors to the Jewish nation, working for the Roman oppressors. So, tax collectors probably had few opportunities for gatherings like this. Tax collectors were considered sinners by other Jews, but Matthew and Mark both note that there were many tax collectors **and sinners** eating with Jesus. Those who were labeled sinners were most likely Jews who had been kicked out of the synagogues, or people who were considered unclean because of their occupation.

When asked about it, Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." Obviously, Jesus was referring to their "sin sickness." But, were the tax collectors and sinners any sicker than the scribes and Pharisees? That's what Jesus seemed to be implying. What He meant by His statement was that those who know they are sick are the ones who know that they need the physician. A person who does not feel sick has no reason to seek out a physician. The Pharisees and scribes did not realize their sickness because they had convinced themselves that they were righteous. Why, because they always brought the proper sacrifices (including tithes). That's why Jesus said,

'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

This is actually a direct quotation from **Hosea 6:6**. The Pharisees had no need of the Messiah in their daily lives. I wonder how many Christians there are who have no need of God in their daily lives? How many times do we go through an entire day (week, month, etc.) without recognizing how much we need God and His mercy? We get so wrapped up in the "here and now" that we completely lose sight of the Kingdom that we are part of. As a result, we completely lose sight of the King and behave as if we don't know who He is.

It is easy for us to be critical of the scribes and Pharisees, and even of the tax collectors and sinners for completely missing the fact that their long awaited Messiah was in their presence. And yet – we completely lose sight of the presence of Emmanuel (God with us) every day.

The Disciples Do Not Fast

Matthew 9:14-17

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

Mark 2:18-22 – ¹⁸Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. ²¹No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins--and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

Luke 5:33-39 – ³³And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." ³⁴And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." ³⁶He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

Notes on Fasting

The disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus at this time, probably because John had been put in prison. They, like the scribes and Pharisees, observed frequent fasting. Fasting is part of the Law, although it only required fasting on one day, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). For the Pharisees, however, fasting was done twice a week and on National Fasting Days. This feast may, in fact, have been on one of the celebrated fasting days which would give further impetus to John's disciples asking the question at this feast. Notice what Mark says in his description of this event:

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting (Mark 2:18)

We sometimes tend to think of John's disciples as "early Christians." They weren't Christians. There were no Christians until the day of Pentecost. John and his disciples were Jews. John preached for repentance because "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom he talked about is the millennial kingdom, the coming of Messiah, the King.

"wedding guests" – This is translated from the expression *whioi tou numphōnos*, which literally means "sons of the bride chamber." This is a Jewish idiomatic expression for those who have been invited to take part in the wedding festivities. They are the wedding guests.

In the early church it was customary to fast each year for the 40 hours that Christ was in the tomb. The problem with this tradition and what many Christians miss regarding this teaching on fasting is the fact that the “sons of the bride chamber” is NOT referring to Christians!

Let’s look into this a little deeper. Who is the bridegroom that Jesus is alluding to, the one who is still with them, the one who will be taken away? Obviously, He is referring to himself. He is the one who will be taken away. Jesus is the bridegroom. And, who is He going to be married to? He will be married to the church, Christians, we who are currently engaged to Christ as the Apostle Paul said to the Christians in Corinth:

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

So, if we are going to be the bride, we are not going to be guests at the wedding.

Therefore, this passage is not saying that Christians should fast. However, there is also no specific prohibition against fasting. Fasting is mentioned in a number of New Testament passages where it is associated with prayer and worship, including: Acts 13:2-2; Acts 14:23; 2 Corinthians 6:5; and 2 Corinthians 11:27. I’m not saying that Christians should refrain from fasting. All I’m saying is that this particular passage, Matthew 9:14-15 (and the ones in Mark and Luke) are not referring to Christians when they refer to the wedding guests.

Then who are the wedding guests? I think He is referring to Old Testament saints and millennial saints. Remember that when Christ was here as the Messiah, He was preaching the good news (gospel) of the Kingdom, not salvation by grace through faith. The Jews were all expecting the Messiah to usher in His Kingdom.

Jesus then gave a couple of metaphors to back-up His position on fasting. The first is that of patching a hole in a garment. He said,

“No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made.” (Matthew 9:16)

Most cloth made from organic material (cotton, linen, wool, etc.) will shrink the first few times it is washed. If a piece of new cloth is sewn over a hole in an old piece of cloth, the new piece will shrink but the old cloth will not. The result being that what was a perfect sized patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth, making the hole even worse.

The second metaphor is about wine and wine skins. New wine is what we today would call grape juice. As it ages, it ferments, turning the sugar into alcohol. A byproduct of this chemical reaction is carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas. In fact, fermentation can produce up to 40 times as much CO₂ by volume as there is grape juice. A wineskin will stretch as this fermentation process occurs even though the pressure is frequently released from the wineskin. However, the wineskin has a limit as to how much it can stretch. Once this limit is reached, the skin will burst. Therefore, putting new wine into a wineskin that has already been stretched, will surely cause the skin to burst.

Explanation

So, what do these two metaphors have to do with fasting? Jesus gave these metaphors to illustrate the effect of trying to apply the precepts of the Law on members of the Kingdom. The Kingdom will not be made up of external laws and ordinances. In fact, the laws of the Kingdom will be internal. The fear of the LORD and His laws will be written on the hearts of His people

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:33)

I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. (Jeremiah 32:40)

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Trying to impose precepts of the Law on the Kingdom will result in something that is fractured and split.

This is NOT talking about legalism within Christianity, although that has been a problem almost from the beginning. Remember that Matthew's gospel account is from a Jew to Jews and it is all about the King and His Kingdom. We are NOT the guests at the wedding, we are the bride!

A Cleansing and a Resurrection

Mat 9:18-26

¹⁸While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." ²²Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. ²³And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. ²⁵But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶And the report of this went through all that district.

Mark 5:21-43 – ²¹And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. ²²Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." ²⁴And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. ²⁵And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, ²⁶and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." ²⁹And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" ³¹And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³²And he looked around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. ³⁴And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. ⁴¹Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Luke 8:40-56 – ⁴⁰Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. ⁴³And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. ⁴⁴She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. ⁴⁵And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" ⁴⁶But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." ⁴⁹While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." ⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." ⁵¹And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. ⁵²And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." ⁵³And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." ⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Notes on the Raising of Jairus' Daughter

In Matthew's introduction to this miracle he only mentions that the man was a ruler and doesn't give his name. From Mark and Luke, we learn that he was a ruler of a synagogue and that his name was Jairus. A synagogue ruler was one of the presiding officers who convened the assembly, preserved order, and invited readers and teachers. In **Mark 5:23** we are told that he said "my daughter is at the point of death" and that after Jesus healed the woman's flow of blood, someone from Jairus' house informed them that his daughter had died. However, here in Matthew he is said to have come to Jesus and, after kneeling, told Him, "My daughter has just died." This kind of discrepancy is fodder for those who want to deny the divine inspiration of Scripture. There are a number of incidental facts like this that are described differently by the different gospel writers. But, what difference does it make as to when his daughter died. The important fact is that she died and Jesus raised her back to life.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' home there was already mourning and lamenting going on. When Jesus told them that the girl was not dead, but sleeping, he was laughed at. The Greek word is *katagelaō*, which means, "to laugh in derision" or "to ridicule with laughter." These people were certain that the girl was dead. But, what Jesus was telling them was that the girl would soon be up and walking around. Obviously, He knew she had died, but He also knew that He would bring her back to life. Once He had brought her back to life He told those who witnessed this miracle to tell no one what had happened.

Notes on the healing of the woman with a flow of blood

While Jesus was on the way to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead, he encountered the woman with a discharge of blood. The word translated, "discharge of blood" is *haimorroēō*, from which we get our English word hemorrhage. This is made up of *haima*, which means "blood" and *rheo*, which means "to flow." She had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and Luke (who was, himself, a physician) tells us that she spent everything she had on doctors without being cured. However, because of her strong faith in what she had heard about Jesus, she believed that all she had to do was touch the edge of his garment. When she did, she was immediately healed, and Jesus told her, "Your faith has saved you."

What do these two miracles have in common? Faith! Jairus had faith that Jesus not only could heal his daughter but that He could raise her from the dead after he learned that she had already died. The woman with the flow of blood, likewise, was healed because of her faith.

Sight Given to Two Blind Men

Matthew 9:27-31

²⁷And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." ²⁸When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." ³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it." ³¹But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

Again, we see that this miracle was done to two blind men because of their faith. Jesus even said, "According to your faith be it done to you." But, here's the amazing thing about these two men. Not only did they recognize that He was able to heal them, but they recognized that He was the Messiah (Son of David). In all the miracles we looked at today and last week, no one else recognized that their Messiah stood before them. These blind men saw their Messiah. Sometimes those who are blind have more sight than those who can see.

Demon Cast Out of a Dumb Man

Matthew 9:32-34

³²As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." ³⁴But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

Mark 3:22-30 – ²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." ²³And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is

divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. ²⁸ "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"-- ³⁰ for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

Luke 11:14-23 – ¹⁴ Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," ¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Notes on the Casting out a demon from a mute man

In Matthew's last account of a miracle in this chapter, he tells us about a man who could not speak because of his demon possession. There are more than 60 references to demon possession in the four gospel accounts, all accompanied by physical or mental illness of one form or another. In this case, the demon prevented the man from speaking. But, when Jesus cast out the demon, the Pharisees, instead of praising God for restoring this man's speech, accused Jesus of casting out a demon by the prince of demons (Satan).

Pray For More Laborers in the Harvest

Matthew 9:35-38

³⁵ **And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for 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 laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."**

Jesus went throughout all the cities (in this region) with his three-fold ministry approach, healing, teaching, and proclaiming the gospel. What gospel (good news) message was He proclaiming? The gospel of the Kingdom. This gospel message is, "The Kingdom of God is almost here if you will accept it (by accepting your Messiah)."

To prove he is the Messiah, Jesus healed every disease and every affliction. And yet, they still didn't recognize their own Messiah in their midst. Jesus realized that He needed to get the message out to all who would hear. He needed workers to preach the gospel message and to shepherd the people, because the current religious leaders were not interested in the sheep. This is why he instructed His disciples to pray that laborers be sent out into the harvest.

So What?

Think about the people that Jesus healed. They all realized that they needed healing. They all approached humbly aware of their needs. They all asked, believing that Jesus could and would answer their prayers. Their faith was strong and their attitude was humble. How does this translate to our needs today? Does our faith have to be strong before God will answer our prayers? Yes, but our attitude needs to be humble as well.

The people who saw these miracles gave glory to God. God will answer our prayers if and when answered prayer will bring glory to Himself, not based on our faith but based on His grace!

Did any of those who were healed recognize Him for who He really was? The two blind men did. Did anyone else? I wonder why not?

Lessons to learn:

- Healing comes to those who:
 - ✓ believe they need God's help
 - ✓ believe He is able to help
 - ✓ believe He will help
 - ✓ humbly ask Him for help (for themselves or for others.)
 - ✓ give all the praise to God
- The Pharisees had 'religion' which was based on a set of rules and they were proud of it -- those who were healed had 'faith' which is based on a recognition of their own need and an attitude of humility
- God answers our prayers based on His will, not based on our level of faith.

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