



Matthew 8

Matthew 8
Tape #8007
By Chuck Smith

As Jesus has come down from the mountain, where He has given to His disciples what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, as He has laid out for them the principles of the kingdom of God, as He has described those people who will be the citizens in that kingdom, and the various characteristics of the kingdom and of their relationship to the Father,

Now when he was come down from the mountain, (8:1)

So Matthew places this as He is coming down from the mountain toward Capernaum. He probably hasn't yet entered into the city of Capernaum. It seems that He does that in verse 5. But He's on his way down from the hillside, above Capernaum,

and great multitudes followed him. (8:1)

The Sermon on the Mount was to His disciples, but now as He comes towards Capernaum, great multitudes again gather around Him.

And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. (8:2)

Leprosy, as we mentioned this morning, was a horribly, loathsome disease. It is a type of sin, because of the insidious nature of leprosy. It has a capacity of attacking the nerve trunk so that a person loses sensation and feeling. They are open running sores, ulcers that will not heal. They gradually rot away a person's body, beginning at the extremities. Usually one form of leprosy, that which is in the mouth, hits the lungs and so forth has about a nine-year termination period.

The outward type leprosy that begins in the extremities slowly begins to rot away the body. A person can be as much as thirty years living with that horrible malady. Incurable by human standards. And so you see how it became a type of sin, incurable by human standards. Progressive, it keeps occupying a greater part of a person's life. Slowly rotting away until it hits the vital organs and then the person is destroyed.

This man came to Jesus and worshipped Him. Now a leper could not live within a walled city. He had to live outside of the walls of a walled city. If a leper would look into a house, the house would be considered unclean to the rafters of the house. And they'd have to go through a purification kind of a ritual. If a person touched a leper, he would be considered unclean. And again, would have to go through a purification ritual.

Now, the interesting thing about leprosy, the fact that it was incurable, the interesting thing is that in the law of God, there were provisions for the leper who was cleansed of his leprosy. So God made provisions even in the law of taking care of a person who was afflicted with an incurable disease so that God gave Himself the room to work, even in incurable cases. And so there is the law for the leper and the day of his cleansing in Leviticus fourteen and it tells how he is to bring two doves, the one is to be slain, the blood put in this little bowl and then the live dove was to be dipped into the bloody water, blood solution, and allowed to fly away, and it was a sign of the departing of the disease. And then he would go into a separate house and for seven days they would shave him and they'd be examined and then examined him again after seven days and then he'd be declared clean by the priest. The law of the leper. And so God has made provision to take care of the incurable malady of sin that is destroying men.

The day of his cleansing, the day of the washing, he worshipped Jesus. The word 'worship' there in Greek is a word that is used only in the worship of God, and thus the fact that that word is used, his devotion and worship was that of, which was given to God exclusively. And he said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (8:2) He puts it over on the Lord. He knew that the Lord had the power. The only question in his mind was the willingness.

And that's so true of our own experiences, it isn't a question of God's power. It's more a question of

God's will. We know that God can do anything. Surely Jesus manifested and we will see progressively the manifestations of the power of Jesus over all kinds of issues and situations. Here in chapter eight, we will see His power over sicknesses, His power over demonic forces and His power over the elements. And so it isn't a question of His ability, it's a question of His willingness. "Lord, if You will, You could make me clean."

And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, (8:3)

No one would touch that man. No one would dare touch that man, he was a leper. When a person came within a hundred and fifty feet of him, if the leper was upwind from the person, he would begin to cry out, "Unclean, unclean," so that the wind blowing past him wouldn't reach the person approaching him. The person would then divert and go around, he wouldn't come close. You weren't to get within six feet of a leper. Keep your distance, but Jesus reached out and touched him. I believe it was a touch of compassion, a touch of love, a touch of caring, a touch of concern.

So many times we think that we are untouchable. The Lord surely wouldn't want to touch me. My life is so rotten. I have failed Him so often. Surely He's not interested in me, but it is interesting for me to note that Jesus was always interested in the person who had the greatest need. Whenever He was in a crowd of people. His greatest interest was always in that person in the crowd who had the greatest need.

The enemies of Jesus recognized this. We are told that when He came into the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath Day, there was a man there with a withered hand and immediately they all watched to see what He would do. It's the Sabbath Day. Will He violate our traditions and will He heal on the Sabbath? You see, when Jesus walked in, they immediately associated Jesus with the man with the withered hand. They knew that He would be most interested in the person there with the greatest need. Now our thoughts are often quite opposite of that. We think, "I'm the most needy person here tonight. I'm gathered with all of these saints. They all have their Bibles. They're all so intent in the Word of God and I'm such a rotten, miserable mess. My life is all fouled up, surely He's not interested in me." But let me tell you something, He's more interested in you than He is the rest of us. He's always interested in the person with the greatest need. And whoever you are here tonight who has the greatest need in your life, you're the one who draws His attention. Jesus reached out and touched Him.

And He said, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (8:3)

Immediately that white putrefying flesh was pink like a baby. The ulcers were gone, he was cleansed.

And so Jesus said, Go to the priest and fulfill the Mosaic law, (8:4)

[Leviticus 14, go through the ritual that is prescribed by the law of Moses]

show yourself to the priest, offer the gift, the sacrifices that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them. (8:4)

Let it be a witness to them of what God has done. But Jesus said,

See that you tell no man. (8:4)

Now, there is a teaching that blew through a few years ago, and it's interesting how that these winds are sort of circular. They blow through, and then they blow out, and then they blow in again. But there was this thing of power evangelism and using miracles and healings to attract attention. Jesus never used them to attract attention. In fact, when He performed this miracle He just said, "Don't tell anybody." And over and over again we find Jesus... when He would do something marvelous in the way of healing, He would say, "Don't tell anybody." And so He commanded him, "Just don't tell anybody. Just go show yourself to the priest, let it be a testimony to them."

And now, coming into the little village of Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, (8:5)

Now a Roman legion had 6,000 soldiers. They were divided into sixty groups of a hundred, sort of squadrons of sixty. And, actually sixty squadrons of a hundred, so that a centurion, the word "century", the hundred, was an officer who was over a hundred men. He was of the elite of the Roman army. In command of those one hundred men. And in the New Testament, we find the account of many centurions, and in every case, they were honorable men.

There was, to the centurion by the name of Cornelius, that the gospel was really opened to the Gentiles and the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and those of his household. He was a centurion. It was the

centurion at the cross that recognized that Jesus, and acknowledged, that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. The centurion that rescued Paul when the mob was trying to kill him. And later, the centurion that was in charge of seeing Paul brought safely to Caesarea to escape from the plot of the Jews to kill him.

And so the centurion, “Jesus entered Capernaum, and there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,”

And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. (8:6)

The palsy was a disease that attacked the joints of a body, causing the joints to contract with excruciating pain and paralyzing the individual; the freezing of the joints, pulling up, the drawing together of the joints, and a person would become an invalid. But it was torturous, it was extremely painful. You remember that there were four men who came to Jesus carrying their friend on a stretcher who had palsy, because the palsy would incapacitate a person. “The servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and grievously tormented.” (8:6)

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. (8:7)

But the centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. (8:8)

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: (8:9)

He is saying, “Lord, I understand what authority is about.” Now notice, here’s, here is what authority is about. “I am under authority.” It’s a chain of command. No man can really rule over others who is not conscious of the fact that he is ruled himself. “I am under authority.” If a man is ruling others without the consciousness that he is under authority, he becomes a tyrant of the worst sort. If he feels he is not responsible to anybody, for his actions, for his deeds, he becomes a horrible tyrant. So you need to understand,

I am under authority, and I have under me men: and I can say to one, Go, and he goes; and I can say to another, Come, and he comes; (8:9)

I understand what authority is about. And I understand Your authority, Your authority over the maladies that attack the human populace. And Lord, I know that all You have to do is just say the word, just like I can say to a servant, Come, and he comes; all You have to do is say the word, and my servant will be healed.

And when Jesus heard it, he marveled, he said unto them that were following, I’ll tell you the truth, I have not found so great faith, not in Israel. (8:10)

Marveled at the man’s faith, He had not found that kind of faith among the Jewish people.

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and the west, and they shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. (8:11)

There is a kingdom of heaven, that glorious kingdom of God. Death is not the end. “It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that, life continues,” (Hebrews 9:27). Death is not the end. And there is that kingdom of God... Abraham, Isaac, Jacob sitting down together with them in the kingdom of heaven. What an experience that must be. They’ll come from the east and the west.

But the children of the kingdom,

[that is the Jewish nation]

shall be cast out into outer darkness: and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (8:12)

There is the kingdom of God and there is the eternal kingdom of darkness and every man has his destiny in one of the two places. You will spend eternity in the kingdom of God or in the kingdom of darkness. That’s a given. And the thing is, you are the one who determines where you will spend eternity. And it is determined by your relationship to Jesus Christ.

And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour. (8:13)

In the first case, the man came to Jesus. In the second case, the centurion came for another, for his slave.

And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, (8:14)

Now, started at the mountain, came into the city, and now going into the place of closest relationships within Peter’s house.

And he saw his wife’s mother and she was laying there, sick of a fever. (8:14)

Now there was the Malta fever, there was Typhoid fever, and there was Malaria in those days. But Malaria was the most common in the Upper Galilee region. For where the Jordan river entered the sea of

Galilee, it was a swampy area, filled with mosquitoes, and Malaria fever was a common thing there. And so it was probably Malaria fever that Peter's mother-in-law had.

And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. (8: 15)

She got up and fixed Him some food.

And when the even 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. (8:16)

Busy day. Began with the Sermon on the Mount, then coming on down into the city. The healing of the leper on the way, the healing of the centurion's slave, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and now, in the evening, multitudes gathering, bringing sick, bringing those who were possessed with evil spirits. And here Matthew said,

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. (8: 17)

And so he relates the healing of the sick by Jesus to the prophecies of Isaiah and if you'll turn back to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, you will find the scripture that Matthew is quoting, verse four, "Surely he has borne our griefs,"--or the word "griefs" is "infirmities"--"and He has carried our sorrows:" Or again, Greek...in the Hebrew, it is... in the Hebrew, the word "sorrows" is "sicknesses," so it's a direct quotation from Isaiah 53:4. "Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4,5)

Peter quotes this scripture also in his epistle, declaring that "with His stripes, we are healed." So, Matthew attributes the healing to the fulfillment of the prophesy that Jesus came to bear our infirmities and our sicknesses.

Now when Jesus saw the great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart to the other side of the sea. (8:18)

So, He got into this little boat, He was ready to depart with His disciples to the other side, but

A certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. (8:19)

I'll go with you wherever you go. He was probably moved with emotion. Just was so inspired by what he saw Jesus doing. Lord, I'll go with You wherever You go. And Jesus sort of cools him down a bit. He doesn't want emotion to be the thing that inspires you to service, because if you can be inspired by emotion, you can also be discouraged by emotion.

And so Jesus [more or less] says,

["Count the cost, fellow, you say you'll go with Me wherever I go, do you know what that means?"]

The foxes have their holes, the birds of the air have their nest; but the Son of man has no place where to lay His head. (8:20)

I don't have a house, I don't have possessions, I don't have any place to lay my head. Foxes have their dens, their holes. The birds have their nest, but I don't have any place to lay my head.

Another of his disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. (8:21)

But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. (8:22)

Now, that seems rather callous and cold as far as Jesus is concerned, because we think of Him very compassionate, very kind, very understanding. Here's a fellow, "I will follow, but I want to bury my father first." And Jesus seems very callused, "Let the dead bury the dead." You have to understand, a little bit, of the culture and all. What this man was saying was, "I'll follow You, but not now." You see, there was a common saying that I need to bury my father first, which was saying, "I'm gonna stick around home until my dad dies." Now his father could have been in top shape, good health; but he's saying, "Well, I'll follow You, but later. Allow me to bury my father first, allow me to stay at home until my dad dies, and then I'll come along and I'll join the company. And Jesus encourages him toward the immediacy. "Let the dead bury the dead, follow Me."

And when he had entered into a ship, his disciples followed him, (8:23)

I wonder if those two were with Him. It was a disciple that said, "Lord, I'll follow You but let me bury my dad first." I wonder if they went into the ship, I wonder if the one fellow counted the cost and said, "Yes,

I'm in. Doesn't matter if I have any house or whatever I'm following. I'm... wherever You go, Lord, I'm in."

They entered into a ship, and His disciples followed Him. (8:23)

And behold, there arose a great tempest, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. (8:24)

And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. (8:25)

And he saith unto them, Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? (8:26)

Lord, the boat's sinking. It's going down. Interesting, many times when we find ourselves in peril and we're looking for help, it seems like the Lord's asleep. You know we're crying out, we're praying and things don't seem to change, they seem to be getting worse, and we have that feeling that the Lord doesn't care, He's asleep. We're gonna drown, I know we're gonna drown. There's no way... we're gonna sink, we're going down. We're gonna drown. So they came back and said, "Lord, don't You care?" And so many times we have this, Lord, don't You care? Look what's happening to me, don't You care, Lord? "O ye of little faith."

I know all about it. When Jesus is on board, there's no way you can sink. That's a glorious thing. When Jesus is on board, you can't sink, and that's why it's so important to have Jesus on board. And so,

He arose, and he rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Imagine. Now they hadn't known Him very long. They're sort of newcomers to all of this, it's just starting out. They're not really sure of Him at this point. They know that He has miraculous power. They had seen the sick healed and all, but now this fellow stands up, and He calls to the winds, and He calls to the seas, and He commands them, "Be still." And suddenly the howling wind ceases and there's a flat sea, glassy sea.

And so they marveled, saying, What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! (8:27)

What kind of a man? It is the Son of God. The one who created the wind and the seas. The one who created the high pressures and the low pressures, moving the air, bringing the winds, bringing the storms, and bringing the calms.

Now when they were come to the other side into the country of the [Gadarenes] Gergesenes, there met him two who were possessed with devils, and they were coming out of the tombs, (8:28)

[the caves that were next to this little village of Gadara]

they were exceeding fierce so that no man might pass by that way. (8:28)

Possessing supernatural strength and supernatural powers. Another gospel tells us that many times they tried to control them by chaining them but they broke the chains, supernatural strength. They terrified the people, no one dared to pass by that way. These men have controlled that particular area of the Galilee by their fierceness. "And they coming out of the tombs, they were exceeding fierce so that no man might pass by that way." (8:28)

And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? (8:29)

Several things here. Number one, they recognized and acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God. James said, "You say you believe in God, so what? The devils believe and they go one step further, they fear and tremble before Him." (James 2:19) You see, saying I believe in God doesn't save you. Even believing that Jesus is the Son of God doesn't save you. It is putting your trust in Him as your Savior that brings salvation. It is the submitting of yourself to His lordship in your life that brings salvation. Here the demons recognized who He was. "We know who You are," they said on another occasion, "You're the Holy One of God." (Mark 1:24) Here they call Him "Jesus, the Son of God." They recognize and they know that the day of their incarceration is coming.

In the book of Revelation, we are told that the antichrist, the beast and the false prophet are cast into Gehenna. And we are told that Satan and his angels are bound in the abussos during that millennial reign of Christ upon the earth. In Luke's gospel, he has them saying, "Don't send us to the pit or the abusso before our time." They know the time is coming when they are to be incarcerated. They know the prophecies of God's Word. And here they're asking Jesus, recognizing His authority over them, knowing that that time of punishment and torment is coming, they question, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

(8:29) [The appointed time that God has when He will judge the earth and the angels.]

And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine that were feeding. (8:30)

So that the devils begged him, saying, If you cast us out, allow us to go away into the herd of swine. (8:31)

Now eating pork was against the law. It was a part of the dietary code of law given by Moses and it was for good reason. Unless pork is well cooked, it has the capacity, you get Trichinosis from pork that isn't cooked well. You got to make sure all of the little worms are fully dead. And so when they didn't have oven with temperature controls and everything else, rather than take the risk of getting this disease from the uncooked pork, it was just forbidden in the law. God had a reason for it, it was dietary, it was for their health. And so the fact that they were raising them meant that they were engaged in illicit business, raising pigs. And so they begged Jesus to allow them to go away into the herd of swine.

There's a lot of things about the spirit world that we don't understand. The Bible doesn't give us a complete explanation and details of the spirit realm but there are enough scriptures concerning the realms of the spirits and demonic spirits that...

In another place, Jesus indicated that when an evil spirit went out of a man, he went around looking for another place to inhabit. It seems like the demonic spirits are not satisfied unless they are possessing a body. Having no bodies of their own, they seek a body to possess. "And when an evil spirit is driven out, he goes through the wilderness, dry areas, seeking a house to inhabit and finding none, he comes back to the house from whence he was driven. And he finds it all empty, clean, nothing replaced that evil spirit, he goes out and gets seven other evil spirits, says 'Hey, I found a place to live' and the last state of the man is worse than the first. So really, just to cast demons out of people, you're not doing them much good unless it's being replaced by the Holy Spirit, filling up the void.

And so these demons were asking permission to go into the herd of swine,

And Jesus said, Go. And so when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. (8:32)

Around the sea of Galilee, there's only one steep place that leads into the sea of Galilee, the shores around the sea of Galilee are all of them very gentle slopes coming into the sea except for one area near the place of Gadara, and you can go today to the ruins of Gadara and right nearby just a few miles away is a steep cliff and that's the only steep place leading down into the sea of Galilee. So when you get there, you know you're at the sight of 'devil'd ham'. They perished in the waters.

And they that kept them fled,

[that is, the people who were keeping the swine, the pigs]

went their way into the city, and they told every thing that was befallen to the possessed [those that were possessed] by devils. (8:33)

They ran into Gadara and told the people what had happened to these two men.

And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. (8:34)

Rather than being thrilled that God's power was brought to their area, rather than being excited that the Son of God is here, they thought more of their commerce than they did the men whose lives were being destroyed by those evil spirits. They preferred their commerce to the healing powers of Christ being manifested. The commercial interest prevailed. And they asked Christ to depart.

Today, there's nothing but ruins there at the site of Gadara. You can walk through the ruins. They asked Jesus to leave, depart. They weren't interested in this kind of righteousness and purity being around them. What a sad, sad story. But what makes it so tragic is that it is repeated over and over through history. People more interested in their commercial projects than they are in Jesus Christ. Not really interested in the needs of a blighted soul or a blighted life. But commerce prevails.

Father, how we thank You for the manifestations of the power that were resident in the Son of God, Who had power over the physical realm, in the healing of the maladies, infirmities and sicknesses of man. Power in the material realm, calming the seas and the winds. Power in the spiritual realm, authority over those evil powers, commanding them and directing them and their obedience to Him. Lord, we want You to have power over our lives, and so tonight Lord, we present our bodies to you that they might be the temple, the

dwelling place of Your Holy Spirit. That You might dwell in us and be glorified in us, Lord. And we invite You to stay close, don't depart Lord from our area but come to our area and bring Your power and bring Your healing and deliver us Lord from the powers of darkness that are engulfing our land. Oh, Jesus, how desperate is our need for You and we call upon You Lord, be near. In Jesus' Name, we pray, Amen.