

November 13, 2016

## “The Deep Healing of the Paralytic”

Matthew 9:1-8

**FCF:** Too small a view of the problem, solution, and savior

**PROPOSITION:** (magnet) Through Jesus’ healing of the paralytic,  
(anchor) we see He meets our deepest need - our need of forgiveness.

### **SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

At the risk of stating the obvious, this recent election was a bitterly contested campaign. The tone was set by the candidates. And it has overflowed into the response to the results.

Those on the Left said, “The needs of this country demand Clinton.” They were denied that desire and many are angry and bitter. Those on the Right said, “The needs of this country demand Trump.” They got what they wanted and many are relieved and glad. But given enough time, the Right will be feeling worse than the Left. Not just the same but worse. Why? Because they got what they asked for. Which is often the dynamic with an election, a relationship, a job, or any bright shiny thing. It’s a mirage, an illusion, a false hope, a lie. It can’t deliver.

It’s a cycle. It begins with having too small a view of our problem. Which then leads to too small a solution. Which then leads to too small a savior. And then to deep disappointment.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [Matthew 9:1-8](#)

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

### **SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

The battle between smartphone manufacturers is interesting to watch. Each is trying outdo the other on camera quality, battery power, durability, and aesthetics. The reviews usually speak of vast improvements. “This one is better, stronger, faster than the last.” But occasionally, it can be mixed. “This is not such a big deal. The last model was just as good, if not better.”

That’s how we might respond to this miracle. A major theme of Matthew’s Gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God, His rule and reign on earth. Jesus has shown Himself to be the King, His authority proven by His word and deeds, His teaching and miracles. He’s cleansed a leper, healed a servant and Peter’s mother-in-law, calmed a storm, and cast out demons. Now we come to the healing of this paralytic. And we might be tempted to say, “What’s the big deal? The last miracles were just as impressive, if not more so.” That would be a mistake.

A case could be made this is the greatest miracle so far. For Jesus is showing Himself to have authority not just over disease, nature, and demons but sin. Think about that. Through Jesus’ healing of the paralytic, we see He meets our deepest need - our need of forgiveness. How? Let’s look at this in three parts - our great need, His great supply, and the great cost.

### **I. OUR GREAT NEED**

Let’s start by looking at our great need ([READ Matthew 9:1-2](#)). What’s going on here?

A) *The Expectations That Day*

This account is shorter than the others. But each makes clear the expectations that day.

1. Assumptions about this teacher

This man and his friends are coming with certain assumptions about this teacher. No doubt they had heard of His power and prior healings. And they reason, “Perhaps he would do it again.”

2. Assumptions about the need

So they have assumptions about this teacher. And about the need. We don’t know the nature or cause of this man’s paralysis. We do know the medical care would have been limited and the burden significant. Likely, he is thinking, “If I could only walk, then everything would be right.”

*B) The Assurance Jesus Gives*

So you see the assumptions and expectations that day. Which then leads to the assurance Jesus gives ([READ Matthew 9:2b](#)). You can imagine the response. “How does that help me?”

1. His sins were forgiven

Jesus is saying two things. Explicitly, He is declaring, “Your iniquity and transgressions have been removed. Your disrupted relationship with God has been restored. You’ve been forgiven.”

2. And that was his greatest need

Explicitly, that’s what Jesus says. And by this, implicitly, He says, “You’ve been forgiven. And that’s your greatest need. I know this paralysis has been hard. I know that. But you need to know that that’s not your deepest problem. It’s your sin. And I’ve come to take care of both.”

Jesus is making clear to everyone there that day - and to us - that that’s our greatest need.

*Illustration:*

He is coming to this man and working with him much like a doctor with a patient. I love this quote from Peter Chrysologus, a 5th c. Italian bishop ([READ quote](#)), “When does a doctor ever inquire into or examine the wishes of those who are ailing, for a patient is prone to be of a contrary mind in his wishes and demands?” Whose counsel needs to be heard, after all?

*Application:*

We need to see ourselves in this man and ask, “Are we hearing what Jesus is saying to us?” More than relief from or attainment of anything else, we need this. More than physical health, material wealth, relational peace, or political scores, we need our sins to be forgiven.

Perhaps the biblical images of forgiveness will help. Forgiveness is hostility giving way to reconciliation. It is the lavish welcome for the returning prodigal. Forgiveness is sin removed, cast behind God’s back and into the depths of the sea. It is the defilement cleansed and washed away. It is the debt we owe paid for by another. It is sweet freedom from our bondage.

([READ Matthew 9:2b](#)) Through this healing, we see Jesus meets our deepest need.

## **II. JESUS’ GREAT SUPPLY**

Which then takes us to the second point, Jesus’ great supply ([READ Matthew 9:3-8](#)).

*A) The Accusation by the Scribes*

The scribes are religious authorities. This is the first hint of opposition from that camp.

1. Assumptions about sin and suffering

They too have assumptions. "Sin is always at the root of suffering." That's true in terms of the Fall. But they took that too far. "Your sin is the cause of such sickness." Well, not necessarily.

2. Assumptions about Jesus

So they have assumptions about sin and suffering. And Jesus. "Only God can forgive." True. Jesus is claiming that prerogative and right. "That's blasphemy," they say, deserving of death.

Imagine this scenario. You have three men - Larry, Curly, and Moe. Larry punches Curly. Curly is furious with Larry. And Moe comes along and says to Larry, "I forgive you." You can imagine the confusion. Larry would say, "I didn't punch you. I punched him. How can you be offended?" To which Moe says, "What you did to him, at a deeper level, was done to me."

*B) The Confirmation from Jesus*

So, was Jesus a blasphemer? Or does He have the authority to forgive sin?

1. The test

Jesus puts it to the test. It's one thing to say such a thing. Anyone could do that. But how would you know? It needs to be proven somehow, His claim to divine authority put to the test.

2. The result

So Jesus speaks again to the paralytic. He gives a command (**READ Matthew 9:6b-7**). So there it is, the proof. Jesus has authority not only to heal but to forgive. This is a stunning revelation.

The forgiveness of our sins is our greatest need. And it's met by Jesus' great supply.

*Illustration:*

Think in terms of applications for college scholarships. There's the possibility of a free ride, everything paid for. So let's say you have the grades, the scores, the references, the resume. And the school gives you this scholarship as a reward with the expectation of even more. It's a bit of pressure. Now imagine if someone else earned it and then it was transferred to you.

*Application:*

That's what we have here. There's nothing left to earn or achieve. There's no work to be done or worth to prove. Your standing is not on trial. You are completely secure. What a gift!

Now, if you're a Christian, ask yourself this. What are the areas in your life where you need to hear and to live out of that? Why are you so busy and frenetic, so restless and worried? "Take heart, child of God, your sins are forgiven." Look to Him, as this man did, and be free.

Through this healing, we see Jesus meets our deepest need - our need of forgiveness.

### **III. THE GREAT COST**

This forgiveness is so free. That said, it is so costly. Which takes us from the great need to the great supply to the great cost. How, after all, can Jesus say this? How is this possible?

*A) Easier to Declare*

As I said, this was easy to say, to speak the words ([READ Matthew 9:2b](#)).

1. Could have been dismissed

It could have been dismissed. We know there were false messiahs at that time making claims.

2. Now impossible to refute

It could have been dismissed, if things had stopped there. But they didn't. Now it's impossible to refute. Jesus was able to say, "Rise and walk." Which means He can say, "You're forgiven."

*B) Difficult to Achieve*

But however easy it may be to say such things, it was so difficult to achieve.

1. The healing of the paralytic

Think with me. We have here an account of the healing of a paralytic. Imagine this man's day. Beyond his wildest expectations, he now has new strength in his limbs and new assurance of life.

2. The means of his healing

But what is the means of this healing - the deep healing of his soul? For him to rise from his bed and walk, Jesus had to be raised on a cross to die. However bright the sun may have been that day, the shadow of the cross loomed large. This was why Jesus came ([READ Matthew 1:20-21](#)).

For Jesus to meet this great need with His great supply, He would pay the greatest cost.

*Application:*

The same is true for us today. So, what do we do with this? How can we say thanks enough? Is it even possible? Our lives as a continual sacrifice. Our hearts as a glad offering. Our strength given gladly for Him. Our hope centered in Him. Could we possibly do less?

*Illustration:*

When the reality of this broke into the life of Charles Wesley, it utterly changed him. Old destructive habits died. His preaching had a new vibrancy. He gladly gave himself to caring for condemned prisoners in Newgate Prison. On the first anniversary of his conversion, he wrote an 18 stanza hymn of praise to his beloved Savior. Perhaps you recognize it ([READ 1st stanza](#)):

O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise.  
The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace.

To the degree we are grasping what Jesus has done for us, that will be our song and prayer.

Through this healing, we see Jesus meets our deepest need - our need of forgiveness.

**CONCLUSION:**

C. S. Lewis captured this beautifully in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. There's a boy named Eustace. He's selfish and mean. Everyone despises him and he despises everyone else. But he finds himself magically transported to a ship, the *Dawn Treader*. At one island stop, Eustace wanders off and finds a cave filled with treasure. He laughs, thinks he now has a leg up on everyone, and falls asleep - amidst the hoard of a dragon. And, having fallen asleep with a

dragonish heart, he awakes as a dragon. The reality of his predicament begins to settle in. He's stuck like this. He cannot undo it. He will be left behind, terrible and horrible forever.

But the great lion, Aslan, comes to him and guides him to a clear pool of water. Aslan tells him to undress and get in, meaning, "Take off the dragon skin." So Eustace tries. He gnaws and claws at the scales, peeling off layer after layer. But there's just too much. "You're going to have to let me go deeper," Aslan says. And this is what Eustace relays ([READ quote VDT](#)):

I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now...The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt...Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off...and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobby-looking than the others had been... Then he caught hold of me...and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment...Then I saw...I'd turned into a boy again.

Eustace's need was deeper than he knew. He needed to be "undragoned." And nothing or no one could do that but the great Aslan. His great need demanded a greater solution. And savior.

The same was true for that paralyzed man. And the same is true for us. Through Jesus' healing of the paralytic, we see He meets our deepest need - our need of forgiveness.

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