

The Gospel According to

Matthew

Lesson #11 – Ch.8

Matthew Ch.8 is a chapter full of demonstrations of Jesus' great power:

A leper is cleansed – Ch.8:1-4

A centurion servant is healed – Ch.8:5-13

Peter's mother-in-law is healed – Ch.8:14-17

Jesus explains the cost of following Him – Ch.8:18-22

Jesus demonstrates His power over nature – Ch.8:23-27

Jesus demonstrates His power over demons – Ch.8:28-34

Always position yourself in prayer before you read God's Word. His Word is simple and plain enough for a child to understand, but our hearts are darkened by our own reasoning and by self-love, so much so that our soul needs the light of the Holy Spirit to penetrate that darkness and bring wisdom, conviction, and understanding. Preemptive prayer will help us focus our eyes away from self and on the eternal Word which has the power to change attitudes, desires, motives, and the human will.

Before you begin reading, become still before the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to help you focus on the person of Christ. Ask Him to close your mind and ears to the demands of the world and open your ears to hear new spiritual truths as you study His Word. Now that you are prepared... let's go!

This is a dynamic chapter as we watch Jesus demonstrate His mighty power. Jesus, God in the flesh here on earth, shows up to ordinary town folk. Jews and Gentiles watch in amazement as He begins to heal those afflicted with disease and others consumed by demonic powers beyond their control. The world had never seen anyone like Him! Who is this man the demons flee from? Who is this man who can touch a leper and make his skin return to the condition of a newborn? They stood amazed as they saw Him heal a leper from afar with a spoken word and cool a fever with the touch of His hand. Jesus was about to reveal through the demonstration of miracles that He truly was God in the flesh, brought here to walk among man to demonstrate God's unending love for mankind.

Ask the Lord to expand your appreciation for the power that He holds. Pray as you read through this chapter, God would fill **you** with a fresh faith for His ability to heal your wounds and afflictions. He owns the power over everything in heaven and everything under heaven. He owns the power to perform miracles in your life too. He hasn't changed His mission to save and draw near His beloved creation.

A leper is cleansed – Read Ch.8:1-4

As you recall from Matthew Ch.7, Jesus was coming down the mountain where He had just finished teaching the multitudes the long discourse that we call “The Sermon on the Mount”. It says here in Ch.8:1 that the huge multitude followed Him down the mountain when He was finished teaching, so we know He had a great crowd of witnesses to the miracles He was about to perform. No one could deny their authenticity. People were watching.

1. Often when you read the same biblical stories in different gospels, you will discover additional details to the story. Let's read:

Matthew 8:1-2
Mark 1:40
And Luke 5:12

After reading these 3 different accounts, do you believe the leper had faith in Jesus' power?

What do you find out about the leper who is coming to Jesus for healing?

a. What was the leper's attitude toward this man named Jesus (See Matt. 8:2)?

b. How did the leper position himself in front of Jesus (See Mark 1:40 & Luke 5:12)?

c. How bad was this man's leprosy? Does this sound like he wasn't at the beginning of this trial, but had endured for awhile (Luke 5:12)?

The leper didn't come to Jesus with a “demand” for anything. He came in a posture of humility, desiring to be healed from One he knew had the power to heal him. He only wanted healing if it was in line with God's will for his life. Of course, the leper wanted to be done with the pain and suffering with that dreadful disease, but he was confident enough to wait in the all-knowing, all-loving, person of Jesus Christ for his future. How do we know this?

2. Look at Matt.8:2. What did the leper say to Jesus as he worshiped Him?

“If _____ . You can make me clean!”

The reason the leper's attitude ministers to me is because of the intense affliction he had already endured, and yet he came to Jesus in an attitude of humility, and not in one of bitterness or self-pity or anger for what he had suffered. I'm sure he desperately wanted a break from all the pain, humiliation, and isolation of this disease, but yet He was willing to accept God's will above his own pain and suffering. What a soldier; he was willing to decrease, so God's glory could increase.

In his book "Unclean," L.S. Huizenga describes some of the horrors of leprosy.

Leprosy was a slow, painful death sentence to your life. The disease begins with pain followed by numbness in one area of your body. Soon the skin in that spot loses its color and becomes thick, glossy and scaly... as the sickness progresses the spot becomes an ulcer due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between swellings, so that the face of the afflicted person begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers and toes drop off. Eyebrows and eyelashes fall out and then comes the smell. The sores of the leper emit a very unpleasant odor and if you stay with a leper for sometime they say you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your own mouth, probably due to their odor. Can you imagine enduring that kind of suffering day by day by day?

As if that wasn't enough to deal with, people would recoil at the sight of you and you are bound by law to stay at least 8 feet away from any other human being. If you caught sight of someone coming your direction you were bound to cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" Lepers were forced to live in complete isolation, never to have intimate conversation or intimate touch with another human ever again. Can you imagine being isolated from a family member in this way - a husband or a child forever banished from your home, never again to be able to embrace you or any other human being? The worst part of leprosy would be the finality of it. It was a death sentence in those days with no hope of a cure, until Jesus the Healer came to town.

Jesus spoke right to this man's deepest needs. He seemed to know just what a leper would need the most. He touched His deepest need.

Isn't that the way of Jesus? He knows our:

Deepest Deep
Lowest Low
Greatest Need
Most Gripping Fear
Overwhelming Worry

And:

THAT IS WHAT GOD DEALS WITH FIRST!!!

3. What did Jesus *do* to the leper, and what was *Jesus' response* to the request for healing?
Matt. 8:3- _____

You see, the biggest need we all have is intimacy with Jesus, and so Jesus *gives Himself* to us. Scripture says He gathers the lambs in His bosom. This includes the diseased, the poor, the unattractive, the dirty, the wounded, and all of society's outcasts.

He knows how to touch you just where you need to be touched the most. He knows when you need physical touch, emotional touch, or spiritual renewal, and He is there willing to give us just

what we need at the precise moment we need it the most. Jesus boldly touched the ulcer-eaten skin of this leper that caused others to recoil. He embraced the leper who longed for physical touch and restored hope. He embraces us too – the wicked sinner whose life has been eaten away from ungodly choices and bad habits. He embraces us even though we have been infected with sin, when we call out to Him for renewal and cleansing.

4. We know this man already had a full case of leprosy... how effective and timely was his healing (v.3)? _____

5. When God heals, He is not limited. It doesn't matter if the afflicted one is 20% affected by a disease, or 80% debilitated by a disease. God has the power to heal completely. There was a certain man of Bethany whom Jesus loved that became ill. Jesus went to heal him, but when He arrived, the man was dead. How dead was he, and what grand miracle did Jesus perform? Read John 11:1-44.

Now that is complete healing! Percentages mean nothing to God. He owns the power over heaven and earth. He created man simply by gathering some dust from the ground and blowing His eternal breath into man's fragile nostrils. Certainly if Christ can restore a man's rotting flesh back to its flawless beginning, can't He heal that relationship in your life too? In the same way, He can restore rotting souls of sin like ours into souls of righteousness that stand before God. Boom! What a gift!

6. Do you know someone who needs a miracle today? Is that someone a dear loved one? Is it you?

Do they (or you) need spiritual healing - forgiveness from sin, or the miracle of physical healing? Write out a bold prayer for them here – or write out a prayer for yourself.

God is certainly capable! Pray in faith coupled with humility for God's healing, along with His perfect will in your life. Take a cue from the example we had in Scripture of the leper who came **boldly** up to Christ with his request, but at the same time came **humbly** with the desire more than anything else: for God's perfect design to be realized in his life. Try a fresh form of humility by following the lead of the leper and kneel before Jesus or fall on your face in an attitude of complete worship. We can come boldly, unashamed of the desires of our heart, asking our heavenly Father to come and touch the greatest needs of our life, whether they be physical like the leper, or spiritual and emotional, like the woman at the well. We serve a benevolent God who desires to bring wholeness.

7. As we read through this story of the cleansed leper, I was also struck by Christ's attitude toward the leper. Matthew quotes Jesus as being "**willing**" to heal, but what does Mark reveal about Jesus attitude toward the suffering leper (See Mark 1:41)?



When the heart of faith cries out to God for deliverance, God jumps with earnest compassion to offer release.

8. Let's look up some Scriptures about God's love and how much our Father in heaven loves and cares for us:

a. Romans 8:31-39

The Bible says He is for YOU. How can you be sure? Check out Romans 8:32.

Another great truth to remember during trying times is that the Spirit Himself goes to prayer for you! Whhhhaattt? Oh yeah, the Holy Spirit fights in the spiritual realm for your victory. He cries out to our heavenly Father on your behalf for spiritual success in your situation.

Picture the Holy Spirit, on His knees, face focused on Father God with YOU in mind, your problem in His thoughts, your name on His lips.

Yep, Romans 8:26 declares that the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with GROANINGS too deep for words.

That's crazy to think about. The Holy Spirit groans when He expresses to God my deep needs? Gosh, how humbling is that thought. Great love.

b. Psalm 147:3-6

Put your hope on verse 11:

9. Jesus was "willing" to help. How should our hearts move in compassion as we see the needs of others? Do we move to meet needs quickly, or do we see the need and desire to help, but after time become preoccupied with the affairs of our own life and offer to do nothing?

a. When needs arise in people of the church and they are not met by others in the Body of Christ, those members can feel like an outcast or be made to feel unimportant. It's to the detriment of the church when one's needs go unmet, and they are left to do battle alone.

What does Romans 15:1-5 exhort the strong to do?

Wouldn't it be great if every believer had an active plan to be financially, spiritually, and physically prepared to meet a need if God brought it our way? We cannot meet every need, but if we were intentionally thinking about these things, God may use us in some phenomenal ways.

*Could we spend less in order to have some wiggle room to give more?

* Could we eat better, exercise more, and get ample sleep in order to be better fit for use?

* Shouldn't we begin every morning seeking God's power over our lives and an equipping for the day ahead?



Intentionally living can lead to a greater influence as God's instrument!

10. As children of God, what should be our conduct during times of suffering affliction (Philippians 1:27-30)? _____

11. Peter prayed a prayer at the end of his book for faithful followers; it was a prayer for all those who were suffering. What was his desire for these suffering saints (1 Peter 5:10)?

***Stop and pray for one you know who is suffering today, that they would be
Perfected Established Strengthened
by the hand of God.***

Do a 'word meaning search' on these 3 words!

Write below some interesting facts about what you found:

12. The Lord does not want us to live in fear of our tomorrows. He wants His children to reside in peace. We can be weighed down by the cares of this life. 1 Corinthians 7:32a says He wants us to be without care. Where are we to place all those worries and concerns?

Write out 1 Peter 5:6-7:

Take a mental picture of you looking down at your open hands, holding that one thing that concerns you most, and then mentally toss that thing away from you and towards the Savior. Leave it there with Him. Remember, the God who loved you so much that He hung on the cross for you has already done the hardest thing there is to do for you! Moving on your behalf in this situation takes little of His power. It is an easy thing for Him to accomplish compared to what He has already done for the world!

He will care for what concerns you!

A centurion servant is healed – Read Ch.8:5-13

Jesus leaves the multitudes at the base of the mountain and travels on to Capernaum. Some people must have gone back home and I'm sure others followed, not wanting to miss the next miracle. When He arrives in Capernaum, He is met by a Gentile believer, a business man who owned a slave that was dear to him and had fallen ill. This Gentile Centurion (army commander) recognized that Jesus had authority over physical illness.

Had the ill slave heard about the healing of the leper? Maybe he had seen the miracle with his own eyes. Jesus was beginning to gain a reputation as the miracle worker of that region and I'm sure news was spreading fast, especially in a time when medicine was scarce and medical knowledge so limited. He had already cured thousands and wiped out the existence of many plagues.

The business man approaches Jesus with his desire for healing to come to this paralyzed slave whom he loved, who was home lying in bed.

Let's pick up the story... Read Matthew 8:5-13.

The Centurion explains the situation to Jesus, but didn't ask for anything initially; Jesus, in His willingness, offers to go and heal the servant (v.5-7). The response of the Centurion is pretty remarkable! I mean, I would have just said, "Sure here is my camel, let's go!" After all, He was offering!!! But this man's response was one that really captured the heart of God.

13. What did the Centurion believe *about himself and about Jesus* that was revealed by his answer here in Matt.8:8?

The Gentile Centurion believed the very thing Jesus had had a hard time explaining to the Jews:
Jesus was so powerful that He could heal by the spoken Word.

Spurgeon put it well when he said, "All our Lord's miracles were intended to be parables. They were intended to instruct as well as to impress. They are sermons to the eye, just as His spoken words were sermons to the ear."

Jesus' miracles were sermons for the eyes for all onlookers, revealing Jesus Himself as God in the flesh with the ability over physical illness and nature itself. Wow!! Not everyone got it, not even those who were standing the closest as Jesus brought new flesh and restored fingers and toes to the leper! This Centurion had the faith to believe in who Jesus really was, and he came to him with a heart in anguish over a paralyzed servant who obviously meant a lot to him.

14. When the Centurion told Jesus, "You don't need to come to my house, just speak a word of healing from here, and I know my servant will be healed," what was Jesus' response (v.10)?

This was a man of faith according to Jesus' standards.

There were other times in Scripture where Jesus marveled at **unbelief** instead of **belief**. Let's look at one.

15. Read Mark 6:1-6.

a. Jesus was teaching in the church and was being met with rejection. What country was He teaching in and who was with Him?

b. What was Jesus response to their disbelief (Mark 6:4)?

c. How did this disbelief limit His ministry of healing in that place (Mark 6:5-6)?

As a result, Jesus limited His power to teaching only and a few handfuls of miracles.

This makes me wonder what my unbelief has cost me. Has my own unbelief hindered God from doing something bigger in my own personal experience than He could have done?

Jesus spoke of the Centurion's faith as "wonderful" to teach us what to admire. He wanted His followers to mimic not the outward, but the beauty of holiness and the persistent child-like faith of this disciple of God.

"Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable – receives the impossible!"

(Spoken by Corrie Ten Boom, a woman who would know what it meant to need a miracle and get one!)

Peter's Mother-in-Law is healed- Read Ch. 8:14-17

16. Jesus enters Peter's house to rest awhile and discovers Peter's mother-in-law is gravely sick. I wonder if Jesus was tired from the weeks of ministry He had just finished. There always seems more to do in ministry than can be done. Ministry is not always convenient. Here in Peter's home were no crowds, no one to impress with a miracle; there were only friends in ministry, fellow laborers. Jesus never cared if the needs were many or few. They were all a top priority to Him if it concerned one of His sheep. His desire to help was just as strong.

According to Matthew 8:14-15, what gesture did Jesus do as He brought healing to Peter's Mother-in-law? _____

Also – compare it with the version of the story in Luke 4:39. What was added from this account?

I like the thought of Peter's mother-in-law being touched by Jesus' hand. This is God in the flesh, touching her personally. What power must have been wielded through that touch? How could nothing happen after a touch from deity? Wow, a crazy thing to think about.

Look at the following Scriptures and make comments about the idea of “God’s hands” being a powerful point of help in your life.

Isaiah 41:13-14 ESV

For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.” Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 48:13 ESV

My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and *my right hand spread out the heavens;* when I call to them, they stand forth together.

Isaiah 41:10 ESV

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, *I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

The Cost of Following Him **Please read Matthew 8:18-22**

Matthew stops in the middle of all these miracles and inserts this section on “The cost of discipleship.” At first glance, it seems like an odd place to insert this topic, but think about what the multitude had experienced. They were witnesses to great miracles never seen before, and they were drawn to this man Jesus because of the mighty displays of power by His hands. At this point I’m sure He had a lot of “groupies,” people following Him just to see the next big event, the next big show of the miraculous. So with that in mind, it makes perfect sense that the Savior would want to nip that in the bud. What better way than to give a sermon on the cost of being a disciple!

Jesus never wanted anyone to get the idea that following the Christ came at no personal cost. As soon as we commit our lives to follow the Lord, we are called to give up all our personal rights. We no longer belong to ourselves. We have an owner so to speak and His name is Jesus. We set our desires, rights, valuables at His feet and make Him Lord of our life.

Walking with Jesus is not always glorious, and most days can be mundane. Not every day is a day to see a miracle. Most days are just plodding along, putting one foot of faith in front of another, but oh when the miracle day comes – it is GLORIOUS!!!

17. In Matthew 8:18-22, we find a scribe pledging his loyalty to Jesus. What did Jesus tell this man? Why would Jesus respond this way?

That may sound kind of harsh and caring. Well, we know that isn’t the nature of Christ, so what could it mean? There is a phrase that was common back in that day in the Middle East that stated, “Let me go and bury my father”. This was a common phrase which meant, “Let me stay

home and help in the family business” or to say it another way, “I want to wait until I receive my inheritance”. Well, that put a different light on it, didn’t it? This young man was really revealing that the inheritance money was of utmost importance to him, and Jesus knew it.

A true disciple is identified with Christ in surrender, suffering and sacrifice. This kind of life seems foolish to the world, but to the Christian, it is wisdom.

Sometimes in life, Christ will lay down a cross before you and He expects you to pick it up. These are often things that have intruded into our lives unexpectedly and are often things we have no control over. They are crosses; sometimes they are at first sight BIG, HEAVY, crosses, and we shudder in fear as we first look at them, perceiving them to be heavier than Christ will ever allow them to be.

If we look at them in view of our own eyes, we will cower and run for relief in other counterfeit places. If we look at our crosses with the eyes of Christ, we will put our hand in His as He carries this cross FOR US daily.

In time, through this journey of ‘cross-carrying,’ we will look back and realize He never required us to really carry anything at all in ourselves. He was just asking us to believe that we would walk beside Him hand-in-hand as the mighty hands of God held all the pressure.

Jesus demonstrates His power over nature- Read Matthew 8:23-27

This storm scares the dickens out of the disciples navigating this simple boat. Their fearless leader Jesus was asleep. Mind you, Scripture mentions the boat was being COVERED with the waves (v.24). How could the Messiah sleep through this? I’m not sure, but I guess Jesus needed some much-needed rest (it must be hard for part of the deity to rest) and was sleeping through the crashing of waves all around Him. We see some of Jesus’ humanness.

18. According to Hebrews 1:3, what is it that upholds everything that exists in life?

19. King David understood God as being a God of _____ and _____, according to Psalm 62:11-12.

_____ belongs to God!

The desperate disciples knew they had no control over the powers of nature. They were helpless. Isn’t that typical? We may often find ourselves in a “storm” of life and there is absolutely nothing we can do to right the ship!

He gets our attention when we have exhausted all our human solutions and resources. When we look up and set our eyes on Him, raising our hands in desperate need for Him to pick us up as a little child. He comes to the rescue.

Fill in the blank – “In this season of life, I am desperate to change

Only Jesus can calm my storm and _____.”

Jesus demonstrates His power over demons- Read Matthew 8:28-34

When Jesus stepped onto shore on the other side of the sea, He was met by two demon-possessed men. They had been living in the tombs by the edge of the shore.

What new details can you find in Mark 5:1-8 about the demoniacs?

These men were desperate, but they knew enough to come to Christ to bow their hearts in worship. Demons were holding them in bondage, it was beyond their control. Jesus wanted to set them free and return their sound mind.

20. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the swine that were grazing a ways off. Jesus told the demons to “GO” and they did; they entered the swine and ran into the sea where they died. The owners of the swine freaked out and went into the city and told everyone what had happened. The whole city came out to meet Jesus, and asked Him to leave their city. Some people would rather have their swine than Jesus.

Even demons believe in the power of God. Write out James 2:19.

Satan could not even exist in one of the vilest animals God had created (swine) without God’s permission. They not only had to leave the two men, but had to ask to be thrown into the swine and then had to have God’s power to get there. The swine were not having it and would rather die than be possessed by demons, so they destroyed themselves.

This is such a serious story. There are people today who are demon-possessed. It is a real thing, but it won’t be anyone who is a true Christian. Scripture says light and darkness cannot co-exist. Believers have the light of Jesus in their souls, and Satan can never enter into the soul of a true believer. SAFE – WE ARE SAFE!

Isn’t that wonderful news? This is part of the glorious gift of being child of the King!
Boom! Never fear that thought again!

Praise the Lord! He is mighty in power and unmatched in ability and power!

I pray you have a week filled with experiences of the awesome,
miracle-performing power of our mighty God!