

## **Lesson #10- Matthew Chapter 9 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):**

1. This chapter begins with Jesus returning to Capernaum. We immediately find Him presented with a very sick man.
  - a. Jesus sees “their” faith but heals one man. Who are “they” and why do you think this is important to the story?
  - b. Jesus’ initial words did not address what the crowd expected, particularly the religious folks in the group. As a matter of fact, some of the scribes were quite indignant with what Jesus said. What were these scribes offended by and why should the sick man have been so cheered by these same words?

### **Help for Teachers:**

- a) To discover more about who “they” are, you should look at the parallel stories found in Mark 2 and Luke 5. We learn that four people carried this palsied man on his bed to be healed by Jesus. On arriving, it was impossible to get near Jesus because of the large crowd. These four had such faith in Jesus that it produced action; they carried the man, on his bed, up onto the roof over where Jesus was preaching, tore the roofing back, and lowered the man, I assume with ropes, down to where Jesus was (James 2:14-24). The behavior of these five was likely seen in a variety of ways by the mob assembled under the roof of that building. Those in the middle but pushing their way toward the front for their own healing may have been angry that these intruders weren’t waiting their turn. Those that had come to see the show were maybe quite entertained. The religious leaders perhaps were even more indignant than ever that people were going to such extremes to identify with this usurper (Mark 15:6-11). If the building owners were there, they might have been growling about the damage to their property and that someone was going to be responsible for the repairs. But Jesus saw their faith. Just as these four brought the man with palsy to Jesus, we are to bring those in need of a savior to Jesus (Matt 14:14-20). They did not know that Jesus would heal the man, but they knew that He could heal him. They knew that without the supernatural intervention of Christ, there would be no remission. We don’t know if those we share the gospel with will come to saving faith, but we know that without Jesus they are hopelessly condemned (John 3:16-21). We must bring them to the savior with a faith like these four had. To what lengths will we go?
- b) In my mind I see the scribes huddled together with their arms crossed and scowling faces, watching every detail of Jesus’ healings for an opportunity to declare Him a fraud, but no opportunity came. The miracles were irrefutable, and the people were convinced that Jesus was wielding the very power of God. But then Jesus takes it one step too far. The climactic circus act begins, and all eyes are center stage as the trapeze team lowers this invalid from the ceiling.

The crowd holds their breath in anticipation of the dramatic spectacle that will surely cap the show. But Jesus doesn't follow the script... He says the most unorthodox thing, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." What?!! Doesn't Jesus know that the most urgent desire of this man's heart is that he get relief from this crippling physical malady? Isn't that why him and his friends have gone to such extremes? But Jesus sees straight through to the real issue, the real problem that is destroying this man, the real problem that all of us have, he is a condemned sinner under the wrath of a just God and facing his due consequences. Jesus always sees beyond what is apparent to what is true. In John 3 Nicodemus also wanted to skirt the real problem and talk about a sub-issue, but Jesus ignored Nicodemus' opening comment and went right to the heart, just like we see in this story. No doubt it was a joy when this palsied man found physical relief, but at the forgiving of his sins he found reason to "be of good cheer" that surpassed all his hopes. Now he was no longer condemned and under God's wrath, the One that would suffer his punishment had just forgiven him. The One that had become a man had just made him a son of God (2 Cor 5:21). While this man was cheered beyond words, the scribes were offended beyond words, but Jesus knew the thoughts of their hearts. Can you imagine the anxiety of the scribes as Jesus now confronts them publicly about what was in their mind, yet unspoken? In their mind they rejected His deity and accused Him of blasphemy (attributing to a mortal the characteristics or actions of the divine, or the opposite, denying the works of the divine and saying they are the works of the mortal). Jesus asks the scribes if they think it easier to forgive sins or to heal someone that can't be healed by any human means. The obvious answer that cannot be argued is that both require an act of God, and if Jesus is healing this person that can't be healed by man, He must be God and equally capable of forgiving sins. Jesus commands the palsied man to rise out of his bed and walk, which he does. The scribes have nothing to say.

2. In verse 9 Jesus calls Matthew (also known as Levi) with two words, "Follow me". Jesus' association with Matthew and his buddies that follows disturbs the Pharisees, who then challenge Jesus' disciples. Discuss how Jesus responded to their complaints and what Jesus meant by His remarks.

### **Help for Teachers:**

After calling Matthew, Jesus goes to Mathew's house, and they have a big meal together. Matthew evidently invites all his buddies, and as would be expected, all his friends are people from his social circle, people that have a lot in common with him. By all Jewish religious and patriotic standards, Matthew and his companions were revolting. Matthew and company, as tax collectors for Rome, practiced immoral business dealings and were well known as cheats and liars, extorting people to give

them enormous sums of money well beyond what was required or reasonable. To make it even worse, they got away with it because they were protected from recourse by the Roman government. Furthermore, this group were Jews, seen by all their countrymen as sellouts and traitors, who for gain assisted the occupying Romans with keeping Israel under oppression. It was one thing that Jesus was going about teaching and getting all the attention that the religious leaders thought should be theirs. People were calling Him Master and Rabbi. It was bad enough that His words and His miracles were unarguable. But now, finally, they had legitimate grounds to discredit Him. He was eating with publicans and known sinners. They quickly confront Jesus' disciples with the charge. When Jesus hears of the Pharisee's grievance, He replies with a statement that is obviously true but seems totally irrelevant, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Then He adds, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

- Jesus was using an analogy that He is the Great Physician, and everyone is spiritually sick and dying from sin. Physically sick people that refuse to acknowledge their condition and allow a physician to treat their disease will not be healed. Denial will not change their situation. In the same way, those that are under the curse of sin will die in their sins without the intervention of this Great Physician Jesus Christ, even if they refuse to accept the reality of their lost and helpless condition.
- Jesus, like a doctor, is come for the sole purpose of healing those that are suffering and dying. Even today, our laws require "informed consent" for treatment. Sick and dying people are permitted to refuse the aid of a doctor. These Pharisees, and multitudes like them, believed that they were not sick with sin, they were good people and keepers of the law, and they did not have a sin problem that required help. Many today still believe the same way. Jesus preached, "**Repent**, and believe the gospel". Salvation begins with knowing we are sinful and turning from ourselves to the only One that can help, Jesus Christ. Like with our consent for treatment laws, anyone who thinks themselves to be good and worthy of heaven because of their works, can refuse the gift that God offers of eternal life and justification through the blood of His Son. They can stand before God and be judged according to what they deserve. The results will be horrible.
- Understanding this, Jesus' reason for hanging out with sinners instead of the self-righteous becomes crystal clear. He is on a mission to save those that are perishing because of their sinfulness. A doctor doesn't practice medicine on healthy people.
- Jesus' follow-up statement tells these religious hypocrites to go have a closer look at the Scriptures they pretended to understand and teach to others. He

refers them to a quote from Hosea 6, telling them to “go ye and learn what that meaneth”. In Hosea 6:4, God tells the nation (both divisions) that their “goodness” is like a morning cloud or the dew, it soon evaporates and is gone. They have rejected the Lord’s goodness, which is like real rain that lasts and satisfies (V3), so He has sent the prophets and His words to “hew them down” and they have been “slain”. But in verse 6 God tells them that His desire is to be merciful with them, He doesn’t want their self-righteous sacrifices and offerings, He wants them to know Him. Jesus is willing that no man perish, but that all come to repentance. He has come so that we can obtain the mercy that is found only in Him. Those to whom the Great Physician comes and who respond in God-given faith will find mercy and grace. Those that will stand in their own righteousness will die in their sins.

3. The disciples of John had a question and Jesus answers it in verses 14-17. What is your understanding of what Jesus said in this passage?

#### **Help for Teachers:**

The “bridechamber” is the room containing the marriage bed. In verse 15 Jesus uses the imagery of the excitement of a bride at the consummation of her wedding, when her husband is there, and all attention is on the relationship. There is no room for being mournful at a such a moment. Later, when work and responsibilities require that the husband travel away for a season, there will be moments of sadness until they are reunited. It’s easy to see the point that Jesus is making in answer to John’s disciples; Jesus, the bridegroom, is moment by moment walking with, teaching, and leading his followers. How could they fast as if in mourning at a time like this? But Jesus, knowing what was to come shortly, prophetically added that He will go away to prepare us a place, with the sure promise that He will return. During that time of separation, His disciples will indeed fast. As for the analogy of the new cloth on the old garment, and the new wine into new bottles, many commentators have attempted to make a connection between the party at Matthew’s house and these illustrations, saying that the point is that the new and converts at Matthew’s dinner party weren’t spiritually mature enough for practices such as fasting. Not saying that they are wrong, but it seems more natural to the reading to think of the inquiry of John the Baptist’s disciples as a separate event, unrelated to the gathering of publicans and sinners at Matthew’s place. It seems unlikely that those assembled at Matthew’s house had gained notoriety as followers of Jesus so quickly. It seems more consistent with the question of John’s disciples that Jesus is straightforward answering their question. Jesus followers are not fasting because it would be inappropriate to mourn and fast at a wedding celebration, just like putting a new piece of cloth on an old garment makes no sense. The new cloth

patch will make the wear and tear of the old cloth of the garment stick out and appear worse, and at the first sign of stress in the patched area, the stronger cloth of the patch will transfer the stress to the weaker old garment, which will only fail again. Likewise, if you put new wine into old bottles, the fermentation that follows will crack and ruin the old bottles. The new wine will pour out, and everything is ruined... not appropriate, just like mourning at a wedding celebration is not the thing to do.

4. Verses 18-31 are three stories of Jesus healing people with various problems. The problems are vastly different, but when it comes to the cure, do you see something they all have in common? What is it and where does it come from?

### **Help for Teachers:**

Faith is the commonality. The ruler that came and worshipped Jesus said that his daughter was absolutely dead, but if Jesus would come and touch her, she would live. Even though everyone at this ruler's house laughed when Jesus arrived and declared that she was not dead, the faith of this man was vindicated when Jesus lifted her up by the hand. On the way to the ruler's house, we read of another famous story, of the woman with an issue of blood that touched the hem of His garment and was healed, Jesus declaring, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." And then we read of the two blind men crying out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." And Jesus gives them their sight saying as He touches them, "According to your faith be it unto you." So, what is faith? Faith is a belief (a condition of the heart) that causes dependance (action). The Bible defines it like this, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). The next verses go on to declare how this belief brings about actions, such as we read about in the adventures of the saints of the Old Testament. How do we obtain such faith? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). Faith is required for our justification (Romans 5:1, Heb 11:6, Eph. 2:8). Faith is not of ourselves. The second half of Ephesians 2:8 and verse 9 says that faith is "not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Without God regenerating our heart and making it possible, we would never choose to come to God in faith (Rom 8:7), it's against our nature. You did not exercise your own faith; it was given to you. So, there is no room for boasting in anything save the cross. You did nothing to earn your salvation, not even in the element of believing. God's grace made it possible for you to believe. God's grace made it possible for the heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 to believe. God's grace made it possible for those we just read about in Matthew chapter 9 to believe.

5. In verse 34 the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out devils by the power of the prince of the devils. This isn't the last time they will make such a claim against Jesus. In chapter 12 they get more specific and say that He casts out devils by *Beelzebub*, the prince of the devils. Who is Beelzebub?

#### Help for Teachers:

The claim of the Pharisees that Jesus cast out devils by the prince of the devils, namely Beelzebub, was an enormous insult to Jesus. Beelzebub was originally the god of the Phoenicians. These were the smart people that we credit with language development and get our term, "phonics" from. They had observed that dead things would begin to rot, and as they rotted living organisms would spring to life in this decay of death (life from the dead). They surmised that this must be the working of a god and that they should worship this god. We know this life from rotting dead things as maggots. The Pharisees were accusing Jesus of working by the power of the god of filth.

6. As Jesus continued to teach, preach the gospel, and heal the people, He had compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. What was Jesus' evaluation of the need?

#### Help for Teachers:

Notice that Jesus had "compassion". He felt the plight of these people, who spiritually were like sheep without a shepherd, wandering around alone and in grave danger and their strength failing. As the church, commissioned to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, it is more than interesting that Jesus sees a bountiful crop ready to be picked (the fields are white unto harvest), but identifies the problem as a lack of laborers to gather in the harvest. We are the labor pool, but it seems many of us aren't much interested in laboring. We must be stepping up as Isaiah did when God called and saying, "Here am I, send me". Jesus said to "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." We need to pray for one another, that God will burden us with the gospel message and that we will answer His call to harvest the crop.