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Sermon Notes

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## **Christ's Power on Earth to Forgive Sins**

### **Matthew 9:1-8**

#### I. Our Greatest Need: Forgiveness of Sins

History is full of the accounts of one king after another

Some were entirely forgettable... their reigns colorless and barely worth mentioning

Some in world history however were noteworthy, characterized by dramatic achievement in some area or another... it seems every nation can boast some monarch whose reign fills the history books with some remarkable attribute or other

- Croesus, the last King of Lydia, died around the time of Josiah: known for his fabulous **wealth**
- Caesar Augustus: mightiest and most capable emperor of Rome... known as the Architect of the Pax Romana, the Roman system of **government** and conquest that was the greatest the world has ever seen
- Richard the Lionheart of England, leader of the Third Crusade to the Holy Land: renowned for his **physical strength**... legend has it he once chopped a thick bar of iron in half with his sword to prove his strength to Saladin, the Muslim ruler he was negotiating with
- Ghengis Khan of Mogolia: known for his **cruelty** and his insatiable hunger for **conquest**; left behind him the largest empire the world had ever seen
- Hung-wu of China, founder of the Ming Dynasty in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Known for his passion for **education**... more schools started under his reign than any before him in the history of China; because of his example, Ming Dynasty lasted for almost 300 years
- Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal: began a school of navigation, mapmaking, and **exploration** that led to voyages of discovery around the world... it is mostly because of him that Brazil speaks Portugese
- Suleyman the Magnificent of Turkey, ruled during the same period when Martin Luther was leading the Reformation... known as the "**Lawgiver** of the Ottomans"

- Shah Jahan, Moghul emperor of India in 17<sup>th</sup> century, renowned for his love for **architecture**... left behind the majestic and exquisite Taj Mahal as a memorial for a beloved wife who died in childbirth
- Louis the Fourteenth of France, the “Sun King” who built the Palace at Versailles, was known for his **extravagance** and lavish **luxury**
- Peter the Great of Russia: known for his humble tastes, versatility, and unbelievable **work ethic**
- Frederick the Great of Prussia: a **military genius** whose battlefield strategies are still studied at West Point

All of these Kings were renowned for some attribute of their reign that still shines centuries later

But today we study the exploits of the greatest King in history... the King of all Kings, the Lord of all Lords... Jesus Christ... the very One that Matthew has been presenting as the King of the Kingdom of Heaven. On what is Christ's Kingdom based? What are the characteristics of His throne, of His scepter? Of His reign? Three great characteristics:

- 1) Perfect righteousness
- 2) Absolute power
- 3) Immeasurable mercy to the needy

Christ was utterly unlike any of these earthly Kings from history... Christ came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many... He had the power of God Almighty, and the humility of the lowest slave. All of His reign was based on meeting an infinitely needy humanity at the point of their greatest needs and satisfying them in His infinite mercy!!

And what were those needs? Well, think of your own greatest felt needs

#### Felt needs:

- Financial: struggling to make ends meet, to pay the bills, to plan for the future
- Employment: I am praying daily for several of you who have no suitable employment
- Health: also day after day I pray for some of you who have cancer, or face major surgery
- Loneliness: senior citizens lonely, remembering a spouse whose passed on... younger people just as lonely, yearning for a spouse they've yet to meet
- Family struggles: broken relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children
- BASIC NEEDS: food, clothing, shelter: Ernie Mills, Durham Rescue Mission

Christ's time faced all these same needs: finances, health, loneliness, family struggles, basic needs

BUT Christ looked through it all and saw **the greatest single need of humanity**: forgiveness of sins

- What kind of King is Christ, the ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven?

- 1) Perfect righteousness
- 2) Absolute power
- 3) Immeasurable mercy to the needy

Today, all three come together in one simple story... another healing account so simple we might skip it, and not realize that this one story is the centerpiece of all Jesus came to do: miracles were not the ultimate point... the ultimate point was a King shaping His Kingdom around

- 1) Perfect righteousness... sins had to be dealt with, not just ignored
- 2) Absolute power... power to heal, yes... but far greater, power to forgive a sinner before the throne of a perfect God
- 3) Immeasurable mercy to the needy... unwilling that even one sinner be lost who He calls through saving faith... deep desire to meet this GREATEST NEED of the human race: FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Kingly power over our physical enemies: disease and death

Kingly power over our natural enemies: stilling the storm

Kingly power over our supernatural enemies: driving out demons

TODAY: Kingly power over our greatest enemy: sin

We also see that forgiveness of sins only comes by faith in Christ

## II. Persistent through Faith in Christ (vs. 1-2)

***vs. 1-2 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.***

Context: just drove the demons out of the demoniac of Gadarenes... comes to His "home town"; NOT Nazareth—He was evicted from there at the start of His ministry

Capernaum was His base area... Huge crowds following Him everywhere He went

***vs. 2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."***

### A. Obstacles

#### 1. Physical Difficulties

- a. completely paralyzed man
- b. heavy, had to be carried everywhere he went

#### 2. Huge Crowd

**Mark 2:2-4** *So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.*

3. Shame of Disease

- a. Jews tended to believe that all disease was the direct result of personal sin
- b. Job's friends

**Job 4:7-8** *"Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? 8 As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.*

B. Faith Works, Faith Overcomes

**vs. 2** *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."*

1. Faith is internal... but Jesus can "see it" because He can see our hearts
2. True faith always results in actions

**James 2:14, 17** *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Faith by itself, if it not accompanied by actions, is useless*

Hebrews 11: "Hall of Faith"... a very ACTIVE chapter

"By faith, by faith, by faith..."

True faith always leads to visible actions

- ◆ Abel's offering could be seen
- ◆ Noah's ark was tangible evidence of his faith
- ◆ Abraham's yard sale
- ◆ Moses' departure from Egypt

**vs. 33-34 “...through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword...”**

Faith is a very active thing... it always leads to something which can be seen in this world, though it is motivated by that which is invisible

Faith also OVERCOMES obstacles:

Romans 4: Abraham faced the fact that his body was as good as dead, and that Sarah’s womb was also dead

So also everyone who ever comes to faith must have a faith that overcomes obstacles

**1 John 5:4-5 everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

The entire world system is set against a sinner coming to Christ!! Satan puts up land mines, barbed wire, machine gun nests, artillery fire, and every kind of obstacle to a sinner entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Only by faith do we persevere and enter!!

Faith overcomes obstacles!!

**Revelation 21:6-7 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.**

3. These persistent actions speak of a deep faith

**NAS Mark 2:4 And being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.**

- a. the men refused to be stopped
- b. their faith overcame every obstacle to get near Jesus
- c. they dug through the roof to get to Christ!!!

C. Helpless Humility of Faith: A True Spiritual Beggar

1. This man a picture of our true spiritual state before God

2. Helpless, cannot draw near, cannot move
3. Nothing left than to be a spiritual beggar

***Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the spiritual beggars for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."***

### III. Pardoned by Faith in Christ (vs. 2)

***vs. 2 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."***

The most incredible, the most costly gift any King has ever given to one of his subjects

Full forgiveness of sins!!

#### A. Justification by Faith Alone

1. No amount of digging through a roof will save you from sin
2. The good works the men were doing could not save the man from his sin
3. By works shall no one be justified

***Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.***

#### B. Blessed by the Faith of Others?

***vs. 2 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."***

1. Matthew mentions the faith of the men who carried the paralytic
2. YET he forgives this man's sin!!
3. No one is justified by someone else's faith!!!

Roman Catholic: "Treasury of merits" concept... masses for dead people to get them out of purgatory

Baptists understand "God has no grandchildren"... no one gets saved by having a godly grandmother or godly father; each person must repent and believe themselves or their sins will never be forgiven

4. BUT the faith of others is instrumental in bringing us to faith!

God uses the prayers and example of a godly grandmother, a faith-filled father to help bring someone to Christ

Illus.: God used the faith of Hudson Taylor to help bring thousands of Chinese to Christ... by his faith, the gospel was available to them so they could believe!! But each one of them had to repent and believe on their own!!

God used Andrew to bring Peter to Christ:

God used the Samaritan woman at the well to bring her whole village to hear the words of Christ... but it was believing His message that forgave their sins!

God uses the faith of simple men and women around the world to bring lost people in contact with Jesus... but each one must still repent and believe on their own

So also God used the faith of these loving friends to bring the paralytic man

#### C. Incredible Good News from the Judge

***“Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven.”***

##### 1. “Consider the source”

Imagine if you were accused of a serious crime and were being dragged into the court to face the Judge... if a bystander called out to you, “Take heart... you’re acquitted!!”, would you rejoice?? NO! But if the Judge looked at you and said, “Take heart, you are hereby acquitted of all crimes!” then may your heart rejoice! Then may you walk as a free man or woman from the courtroom... for you are truly forgiven!

Consider the source!!

##### 2. Jesus: the Judge of all the earth

***John 5:22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son***

##### 3. If the Son declares you “forgiven,” you are TRULY FORGIVEN!!

#### E. True Cost of Forgiveness: Jesus’ Lifeblood

***Hebrews 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

***Matthew 26:27-28 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.***

***Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace***

1. Every time Jesus declared someone's sins forgiven, He knew that He would have to pay their debt in His own blood
2. Joyful message for the sinner, sorrowful for Jesus

**IV. Provoked by Faithlessness Against Christ (vs. 3)**

***vs. 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"***

**A. A Serious Charge: Blasphemy**

1. Teacher's of the Law: "Scribes"
  - a. constantly copying the Law of Moses for use in the Temple and in Synagogues
  - b. therefore, "experts in Mosaic law"
  - c. constantly active in Jewish life... teaching and rendering judgments about everything and everybody
2. Mosaic law on blasphemy
  - a. hotly debated
  - b. usually had to involve speaking the blessed and holy name of God

**Blasphemy: speaking anything that dishonored God or stripped Him of His glory**

- c. clearly teachers of the law felt to claim something for yourself that only God could do constituted blasphemy
3. The charge that eventually killed Jesus... he claimed to be God in the flesh

***John 10:30-33 I and the Father are one." 31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" 33 "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."***

***Matthew 26:63-65 The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus***

***replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.***

B. True Doctrine: Only God Can Forgive Sins

1. The Teachers of the Law were RIGHT
2. Only God can forgive sins LIKE THIS

***Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.***

Illus. Imagine if you were a police officer and arrested a man for burglary... caught right in the act. If the homeowner looked the burglar in the face and said, "I forgive you for this theft," it would be praiseworthy mercy. But if a stranger from off the street came up at that moment and said to the burglar, "I forgive you for this crime!" you would think they were insane.

So, the Teachers of the Law were doctrinally accurate... but they were closed-minded because of unbelief

Their lack of faith in Christ made His forgiveness blasphemy in their eyes... they were greatly PROVOKED by this statement

C. True Application: Jesus is God

1. Their unbelief blinded them to the only reasonable conclusion
2. JESUS IS GOD in the flesh!!

D. False Application: Jesus is a Blasphemer

1. They concluded that Jesus was a blasphemer
2. Before long, instead of worshiping Jesus, they would plot to kill Him
3. Unbelief can take the most joyful news in the world—"Your sins are forgiven!!"—and make it an evil thing, a cause for anger

## V. Powerful Proof for Faith in Christ (vs. 4-8)

**vs. 4-8** *Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.*

### A. Evidence of Christ's Deity: The Logic of Faith

1. Christ Reasons with them
2. It's NOTHING to SAY it
3. It's EVERYTHING to SAY it WITH POWER... with authority to make it so

Illus. Children in St. Maarten... I tested them!! They could say both... but NO POWER

With words Christ created the universe

With words He spoke through the prophets

With words He promised Abraham many descendents

When God entered the world as a man, He was called the "Word of God"

When we speak, it means almost nothing

When God speaks, it means EVERYTHING

Why? Because of POWER!!! AUTHORITY to make His word so!!!

***Job 9:7 He speaks to the sun and it does not shine***

### B. Power to Read Minds

1. NOTE: the Teachers of the Law never opened their mouths
2. Christ simply read their minds
3. Even the most secret recesses of our hearts are as an open book before Christ the Judge
4. More great evidence of His deity!!

### C. Power to Heal Bodies

1. Christ's healing power great evidence of His deity
2. No ailment too great for Him
3. "All authority in heaven and on earth given to Him"

***Matthew 11:5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.***

D. Therefore: Power to Forgive Sins

1. Spiritual logic: "So that you may know..."

***vs. 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home."***

2. Miracles given ultimately to give ASSURANCE of SALVATION
3. Miracles given to IDENTIFY Christ as GOD
4. If Christ is God, then Christ CAN forgive sins

E. Not in Word Only, But Also in Power

***1 Corinthians 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.***

Illus. Any can say "Lazarus, come forth." Only Christ can give with the word the power to make it so!

Many can talk of power... Christ alone HAS the power to forgive sins, heal bodies, raise the dead, bring you to HEAVEN

F. Evidence on Earth, Reality in Heaven

***vs. 7 And the man got up and went home.***

1. When the man stood up, the evidence was overwhelming
2. Earthly evidence for heavenly reality
3. When Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven," it was so...but the man FELT nothing different
4. The physical healing on earth was PROOF for their eyes & ears of invisible spiritual reality

## VI. Applications

A. REJOICE in Christ's Unlimited Power: Not in word only but in deed and truth!!

***When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.***

B. Complete Forgiveness of Sins: Available through Christ's blood

C. An Obstacle Conquering Faith: Overcoming Satan's obstacles

D. An Instrumental Faith: Used by God to bring someone else to Christ