

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING 05:

### *Jesus' Authority over Sin*

Matthew 9:1-8

#### **Introduction: Our Needs In Life**

- There are many needs we have in life. Unlike some of the things your children claim is a need, the following are in fact needs. Not wants, but needs for existence.
- First, we have the need for oxygen. Without the proper mixture for air, we will not survive very long on this earth. In fact, let's demonstrate; who can hold their breath until after my opening illustration is over? The average person cannot go without oxygen to their system for a matter of minutes. This need is one assume and take for granted in life.
- We also have the need for water. It is said that someone can last for three to five days, possibly up to a week, without water. Once the body is deprived of water, the cells and organs in the body start to deteriorate. This is one need that we usually don't get enough of each day.
- And then there is the need for food. Eventually, everyone needs food. It is said that a person can survive 30-60 days without food; depending on how much meat they have on their bones before they take their last bite. ☺ This is one of those needs that many of us have too much of in our life.
- And while this is not needed for survival, per say, we all have the need for companionship. This is probably one of those needs that we don't realize, but it is a longing of the heart, based on being created in the image of God. Did you ever see Castaway with Tom Hanks? What kept him alive was the thought of a relationship and of course, Wilson, who he created to be his companion. That is probably a more realistic need than we want to acknowledge.

These are all great needs in our life, but none of them are our greatest need. As we continue our series on the Authority of the King, we are going to see that Jesus displays His ultimate authority by dealing with the greatest need man has: **FORGIVENESS OF SINS!** Let's set the context . . .

**Vs. 1** → Most likely, this is meant to go with the previous section. After he healed the demon-possessed men, Jesus was begged by the people of the region to leave their area. They were scared of His power and probably a bit ticked off that His miracle of healing those men created a major economic problem to their community (2,000 pigs drowning is a big deal).


And so Jesus gets back into the boat and heads back across to His own city. We see that in the lifetime of Jesus, He had many cities. There was Bethlehem, the city of His birth. Then there was Nazareth, the city of His childhood and growth. At the end of His life, Jerusalem will be His city, the

place of His death and resurrection. But the city of His ministry was Capernaum. That city became the launching pad for much of the 3+ years of His ministry.

Now, remember a few weeks ago, when we started this series, I told you that much of Matthew 8–10 is thematic or topical and not chronological. Matthew does not always record the events of the life of Jesus in order, for often, he tries to develop certain themes. That is what we have here. He is trying to prove to the Jewish people, and us, that Jesus is the King; that He is the Messiah. And in this section, He moves towards that ultimate argument by showing that Jesus has authority over everything and everyone.

I say all of that because this miracle of healing the paralytic probably took place before Jesus took the journey to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It did take place in Capernaum, and according to Mark & Luke, who write more chronological, it probably happened soon after Jesus healed the leper at the beginning of chapter 8. Regardless of that information, this miracle event is probably my favorite in the life of Jesus & I believe contains the most drama.

**Vs. 2** → We are told that there were some people who bring Jesus a paralytic lying on a bed. Mark and Luke fill in much of the details of how that happened. In Mark 2, we are told that Jesus was in a house that was packed with people, so much so that there was no more room. The fire marshal would not have been pleased.

 *Mark 2:3–4 → “And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.”*

Try to put that picture in your head. It is okay to use your imagination. There are so many people in the house that there is no way to get to the where Jesus is located. And when these four guys show up carrying a mat with their paralyzed friend, they realize they have no chance to get to Jesus.

Let's pause here for a minute. Why did they want their friend to meet Jesus? Was it because they knew that He was a good teacher? Of course not. They obviously were bringing their friend to Jesus to be healed by Him. I mean, the word on the street was that this guy heals lepers and sick people; certainly he can heal someone who is paralyzed. But when they show up, they were unable to get through the thick crowds at the doorway. But that didn't stop them from doing something for their friend. They believed so much that Jesus was the answer to their friend's problems that they went to extreme measures to get him to Jesus. We are told that their answer was found in the roof.

*“Roofs of Palestinian homes, which were accessible by outside stone staircases, were typically flat, supported by beams resting on the exterior*

walls of the house. The beams were cross-hatched by smaller poles and sticks, which were covered with thatch, which in turn was covered with a surface of mud . . . The level roof, which needed resurfacing periodically by means of a roof roller, functioned much as a deck does today, offering relief from the dank quarters below, access to fresh air, and a place to dry laundry, eat, and even pray in solitude.”<sup>1</sup>

These men take the stairs up the side of the house to the roof, they remove the tiles, and they begin to dig an opening into the roof. You can picture it can't you? The men were so desperate that as Jesus is teaching, the roof begins to fall, bit by bit. Soon there is a little light shining down from an opening. Soon you see some people looking through. Get the picture? Soon you realize that there are people on the roof and in fact there is someone lying down on a mat. And soon we see these men lower the man to Jesus.

This is where we go back to Matthew to pick up the story. What do you suppose the men thought Jesus should do? What did they want Jesus to do? What did everyone there think Jesus would do? Everyone knew and thought that Jesus would heal the man. But instead, Jesus goes against public opinion one more time and uses this as an opportunity to showcase His identity one more time.

Matthew states that Jesus was moved by their faith (probably a reference to the four men and the man on the mat). And because of their faith, Jesus turns to the man and drops the bomb. He says, *“take heart, my son”*—both terms of endearment. Jesus wants to calm him down. He wanted to show how much He cared for that paralyzed man. But the next words Jesus says are surprising, to say the least. He says, *“Your sins are forgiven.”* This was not what the people expected. It was not what the man expected. And it certainly was not what the religious leaders expected.

**Vs. 3** → Some of the scribes said to themselves, *“This man is blaspheming.”* Mark records that they were thinking this in their mind. They were good teachers of the Law and they knew that the only person who could forgive sins is not them or you or me . . . but God alone! Only God can forgive sins. They would have known . . .

📖 *Isaiah 43:25* → *“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”*

📖 *Isaiah 44:22* → *“I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.”*


And when Jesus claims to forgive the man's sins, something that only God has the right to do, they know exactly what Jesus is claiming. They know that He is claiming to be God. And so to them, they think this is the worst of sins;

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. PNTC. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 74.

it is blasphemy of God. Of course, there is one angle they forget or didn't think about. Right? Maybe Jesus could forgive sins because He is God. And there is where Jesus takes this very turbulent situation.

**Vs. 4-6** → Wow! There are two levels in play here. First, the fact that Jesus knew what they were thinking should have brought an honest fear to them and us. Seriously, what does that do for you? Even right now, listen, this would certainly make preaching that much easier. I know some of you aren't listening and are daydreaming, but I don't know who . . . or what you are thinking about. But Jesus does. What does that do to you to think that Jesus knows exactly what you know right now?

 *Hebrews 4:13* → “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Paul says in Romans 2:16 that on the Day of Judgment, that God will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. That should bring a healthy dose of fear to think that God knows what you think. He knows what you think when your boss says something to you. He knows what you are thinking when your spouse sins against you. He knows the level of pride and lust and anger and deceit that goes on in your mind.

This is true and biblical. God knows what you think. But on another level, I don't think we have to immediately jump to the conclusion that Jesus supernaturally understood what they were thinking. You see, there is discernment in judging non-verbal responses. I'm pretty sure Jesus knew what they were thinking simply because of their body language.

Either way, because of what Jesus knew they were thinking, He asks them a very simple question. Which is easier to say, “*Your sins are forgiven*” or “*rise and walk?*” What do you think? To me, that answer is obvious. It is certainly easier to say something that cannot be physically, immediately verified. I mean, come on, if I told you I could take Rick Najjar in the 400, we could right after church go next door and I could show you.

#### **Illustration: Friend in High School**

- There was this guy in High School that always told us how great of a golfer he was. But when we went with him, it was always the worst round of his life. But when he goes alone, he is always near or close to par.

It is easier to say to this man that his sins are forgiven, for nobody can look into his heart and see that forgiveness. But if Jesus would have told the man to get up and walk, then it would be obvious to everyone whether He had the authority to do it. And this is where the drama gets really serious. I love what happens in vs. 6. It is one of the most amazing, powerful demonstrations of the authority of Jesus. This is one of those that I hope is recorded and we can watch in Heaven. Jesus turns to the religious leaders and says, “*so that you*

*may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” . . . He turns to the paralytic and commands him . . .*

*Rise*—This was a real test of faith on his part. It would have required faith from him to even attempt to get up.

*Pick up your bed*—this was not a temporary healing; he no longer needed that bed. This healing is definitive. His paralysis is over.

*Go home*—this man would forever be a witness to the healing power of Jesus Christ, and more specifically to prove to everyone that Jesus did have the power and authority on earth to forgive sins.

We cannot overestimate the tension in the room when this happens. Jesus is saying, *“You’re going to question my authority to forgive sins? Okay, so that you know that I am not a mere man; so you know that I am God and have the authority to do whatever I want, including forgiving sins; so that you can have one more physical evidence of my authority; so you can have one more opportunity to make up your mind about who I am . . . Son, get up and walk.”* So, what happens at this point?

**Vs. 7–8** → When Jesus gets all-personal, people respond, but usually in different ways. First, the man listens and gets up and goes home. Don’t forget that this happened in a house that was too crowded for the men to get into. This means that this miracle happened in the sight of everyone, this was no private event. I picture the man saying, *“excuse me”* as he tried to make his way out of the house. He stood literally and figuratively as a living example of grace and obedience.

He obeys, but also look at the response of the people. We are told the crowds were afraid and they glorified God. Mark says that the crowds said, *“We have never seen anything like this.”* This often happens when we come face to face with the authority of Jesus; it brings us a healthy dose of fear and praise.

Lastly, I would say the implications of the text are that the teachers of the law were not part of the crowds at this point. They were probably like the kids on the schoolyard that are told that they are going to get schooled on the basketball court, and then actually are schooled . . . they walk away mad, not giving any credence to the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

That’s the story, but I want to spend our last few minutes driving home two very important points of what this teaches us about Jesus. **FIRST, HAVING OUR SINS FORGIVEN IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT NEED.** Jesus does not heal the man so that he would just be able to walk the rest of His life. In fact, that is never the point of the miracles of Jesus. He heals the man to prove that He had already taken care of the man’s most important need, the forgiveness of his sins.

Listen, this is something we say often, but I wonder how often we really take it to heart. Our spiritual condition is a much greater need than our physical condition. Walking, talking, hearing, seeing, rich or poor, house or car, any physical sickness or pain that we might have—these all pale in comparison to the greatest of our needs, which is to have our sins forgiven by God. I think there is a reason why we have this backwards in our life: *We often fail to see sin the way God sees sin!*

Listen, God sees anything that we do as an offense against Him. He sees anything that is not done to His glory; for His glory, as a high crime against His glory. And even one of the “smallest” sins that we can think of is enough to separate us for eternity from a Holy God. We don’t get that probably because we just don’t understand how infinitely holy that offense really is.

Fortunately, we don’t have to worry about that one little sin separating us from God for all eternity; because we have not just committed one little one. We are deep, experienced sinners. It has consumed us. We are as sinful as sinful gets . . . to our core. You see, we downplay sin; we ignore it; we blame it on others; we redefine it; and we even pretend that it doesn’t matter.

Seriously, have you ever thought about how sinful you are? Do you want a really dreadful exercise at some point? Go home and spend about 10 minutes being very honest with yourself and write down all of your sins. All the times you talked too much without listening. All the times you were envious. Your lust. Your anger. Your disobedience to your parents. Go ahead; write them down for the last day.

Now, when you do that, my guess is that you write down all of your sins of commission. That is doing things that you know you shouldn’t do. That is breaking the 10 commandments and other commandments. But did you know that every time you don’t do what you know you should do, that is a sin as well? That is called sins of omission.

So, let’s go deeper. Have you been fully thankful for everything this morning? I’m not even talking about whether you have not complained, but have you been totally thankful? Men, have you loved your wife like Jesus loved the church this morning? Yesterday? Have you loved your neighbor as yourself? If not, add that to your list. Did you waste your time yesterday or did you redeem it for the glory of God? If not, add that to your list. Were your words completely filled with grace to build others up? Nope, add that to your list.

Depressed yet? Well let me heap just one more on there. Here is a great example of how easy it is to downplay sin in our life. Instead of dealing with ourselves, we spend our time pointing out the sins in others. Here is what I mean. This past week, the news broke of Jason Collins, the first professional athlete in the four major sports (NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL) to come out of the closet to admit that he is gay.

Obviously, I would, and our church would fall along the orthodox majority of Christians that would say that homosexuality is sinful. But here's the deal: when that story drops or when others like it come out into the light, which angers you more; that story or your greed of buying that thing you really don't need? The fact that we are living in an openly gay culture or your anxious heart about it? Don't get me wrong: it is sinful and we should stand against it. But don't stand against it because you think it is gross. Stand against it because it offends a holy God just like your heterosexual lust does. And don't stand against it without falling on your face in repentance of the sins you are committing each day. If you do, you probably are not seeing sin the way God sees sin.

Add that to your growing list. Listen, that list is only going to continue to grow longer and longer. It is only going to keep accumulating and your certificate of debt to God is going to continue to grow more desperate as the days, hours, minutes go on. So what are you going to do? Some of you respond by saying, "*well, I am in process, I am working at it!*" Let me just tell you that you will never balance those scales. You cannot do it. You will never work hard enough. Your only hope is to stop running and to trust the One who did the running for you.

And that's the second main thing we learn here. **SECOND, JESUS HAS THE POWER TO FORGIVE SINS.** What we need is to run to Jesus, the One who can offer salvation in an instant. He is the One who can instantaneously offer forgiveness of that long list of sins we have. It is found in the gospel. Let me just say, there is nothing more precious than those words, "*Your sins are forgiven.*" These are quite possibly the sweetest words in the entire Bible.

📖 *Psalm 32:1-5 → "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."*

Sometimes we are quick to say that forgiveness of sins is free. That's simply not true. To have our sins forgiven is very costly; it just doesn't cost us. To have our sins forgiven, it cost Jesus greatly. I can't help but to think as Jesus said these words to this man, He knew what it meant. He knew that in order for those sins to be forgiven, the wrath of God would have to be satisfied. And that would only happen when He was on that cross.

And when that happens, and we respond by faith alone to Him, we are told that He wipes away our sins for good. He casts them as far as the east is from the west. He buries them in the deepest parts of the ocean. He erases any

knowledge of our sin in our account because they were placed upon Jesus. He gets our sin and we get His righteousness.

**Illustration: Rolls Royce**

- There is a story I have heard more than once, but I have no idea if it is true or not. It is the story about a man who owned a Rolls Royce. You see, the British automaker takes great pride in the reliability of their handcrafted automobiles. As the wealthy owner of this car is driving through France on an extended trip, the car experiences some mechanical problems.
- He calls Rolls Royce and asks them to send out a mechanic to immediately fix the problem. The company responded in royal fashion. They put a mechanic on a private jet with all the necessary tools needed and flew him to France to make the repairs. The owner was so wealthy that he wasn't at all concerned about the cost, and would spare no expense to make sure his very expensive car was repaired properly.
- However, after several months, he realized that he had never received a bill for the repairs. After finally getting in touch with the manufacturer, he received this note from Rolls Royce: *"We have no recollection or record of any Rolls Royce having ever had a breakdown or being in need of repair."*

That's great. But how much better is it if we received a note from God like this: *"I have no recollection or record of any sin you have ever committed."* That's forgiveness! That's our greatest need in life! And that is what we come to celebrate this morning around the communion table.