

**Matt 8:1-17** - Trusting Jesus when you're sick

Clint Le Page

Main Point – In your sickness trust that Jesus cares and is powerful.

When you're really sick, sometimes it's *hard* to trust Jesus.-----

A missionary I know named Michelle, wrote this a number of years ago...

'Today has been a really sad day and my eyes are so swollen from weeping and sobbing all afternoon and into this evening. I just lost it today and couldn't fight back the tears anymore... I was told by my Neurosurgeon in his *not-so-nice* bedside manner that there is nothing he can or will do for me, and I just have to learn to live with a spine that is degenerating quickly.

I have 3 bulging discs in my lower spine... causing massive and some days crippling pain daily. I can't stand for longer than 5 minutes before the burning, crushing and then *electric shocks* start down both legs.

Michelle ALSO has sarcoids in her heart & lungs and says, 'now due to the massive amount of fluid that I am retaining it has caused instability in both knees (already I am waiting for knee replacements on both) and my right one is giving way up to 10 times a day... The traumatic ulcer under my tongue is still causing me speech and swallowing issues and last week I was bedridden with severe wheezing all week... I am on 23 drugs daily and the list is growing... Pain is keeping me up through the night and I usually can't get more than 2-3 hours sleep in one hit, SO all of this, compounded with no hope of any more surgeries to relieve pain, caused me to wonder what on earth God is doing, and what possible way this could bring Him glory.'-----

Eight months later Michelle wrote, 'Although I am struggling physically and battling crippling pain most days, I long to still serve God.' And she quotes Ps 28, 'The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusts in him, and I am *helped*.'

I think Michelle exemplifies faith in Christ.-----

And today we see the compassion and power of Jesus to heal, and the faith he calls-for from each one of us.-----**(SLIDE)**

Jesus has just finished the Sermon on the Mount, chs 5-7.

And Matthew now moves from Jesus' matchless *teaching* to his matchless power.

Chapters 8&9 contain 10 main miracles in 3 groups, which are signs showing Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. We'll look at them over the next 4 weeks.-----

We'll cover our text under **three headings**: A Leper's faith, a Centurion's faith, and Jesus' Compassion and Power.-----

From **v2**, we see the **Leper's faith**.-----**(SLIDE)**

We're told the man who comes before Jesus had leprosy.

The Greek word refers to serious skin diseases, *including* what we know as **Leprosy**, which was a death sentence.

The disease, began with thick, scaly skin & progressed to sores and ulcers.

As it spread sensation ceased, and more n' more parts of your body became disfigured, and dropped off.-----

With no cure leprosy sufferers did not get healed; you'd die of other infections.-----

And Never was there a disease that so separated victims from others.

People regarded lepers with superstitious horror.

It would cut you off socially and religiously, & make you live alone – as Leviticus 13 commanded. Lepers were ritually unclean.-----

And never has there been a problem that so illustrated humanity's spiritual problem.

Leprosy would cut you off from people, and from worshipping God at the temple, but sin is a *spiritual* disease that separates us from others, and from God.

*Sin* spreads, and is fatal.-----

While most lepers would have to live out of town and stand far off and cry for help, this leper boldly comes right up to Jesus & falls on the ground before him.

His whole body and soul goes into this act of reverence, worship, and humility. He acknowledges *Jesus' power* and authority: "Lord if you are *willing* you can make me clean."

In faith he pleads for help.

He is sure of Christ's power to heal: 'If you are willing you can make me clean', you have the power.-----

This was *faith in Jesus' ability*, not a *certainty* that Jesus would heal.

He submits himself to Jesus's will, and trusts *he will do* what is best.-----

Now according to the OT if a Jew touched a leper, they would become *unclean* until evening.

But what happens here?---(SLIDE)

Jesus touches the leper, and Jesus doesn't get unclean, Jesus makes the leper clean.

Jesus is powerful to heal. His *touch* is powerful.

It is more powerful than the late **Princess Diana** touching people with AIDS(SLIDE) at a time when many were afraid to do so.-----

Jesus touches a man that others shunned, it was unthinkable.

But such is the love of God for sinners. This is Jesus' compassion for people.-----

Jesus could have healed the man with a *word*, as we'll see next. But Jesus chose to reach out to this untouchable man, and to physically *touch him* when no one else would.

His touch is powerful.----- And His *word* is powerful.

For what does he say?----- "I am willing. Be clean!"-----

And immediately the man is cleansed, cured, healed.-----

Jesus asks him to go to the priest and offer the sacrifices required, 'as a testimony to them'.

In other words, it is the *declaration* and proof that this man had been healed.

And it's a testimony that one *greater than Moses* has come.

The healing is to be evidence to the Jewish priests of Jesus' power and person – he *IS* the Messiah.-----

In the **next scene we see the Centurion's faith.**(SLIDE)

V5, a Centurion, so an officer leading a *hundred* Roman soldiers, comes asking for help, "Lord, my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

And does Jesus say: I'm too busy, or, Oh you don't deserve it, you're a foreigner and you serve our Roman oppressors?

No. What Jesus says in v7 *could be* a statement or a question, but either way, Jesus is *willing* to help, and enter this Gentile's house.-----

And please pay attention to the centurion's response...

"Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed."

The centurion, like the leper is humble. He knows he is unworthy to have the Lord Jesus come to his home, yet amazingly, he has such confidence in the power of Jesus words.

'Just say the word, and my servant, my boy, will be healed.'

And to illustrate the principle of authority he continues in **v9**, and is effectively saying, Anyone with *authority* can issue orders and know it will be done, and *Jesus*, I know you have authority, matchless authority, even over sickness and disease, and I know if you want to heal my servant with a word, you can; *even from a distance*.-----

Somehow, he knows Jesus' power and authority is awesome.-----

Christ *IS* mighty to transform lives and to heal bodies.-----

And then we see Jesus **commend this man's faith**.

Jesus is astonished at this *non-Jewish* man's faith:

"Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

Wow, no Jew Jesus had met, had the faith of *this man*.-----

In **v11** Jesus then speaks about the future.

Many will come from the east and the west, that is many non-Jewish Gentiles will come and enjoy the kingdom of heaven, while many Jews, will be thrown outside into the darkness.-----

The KoG is not limited by social and racial boundaries.-----

This centurion was an officer in the pagan army that occupied Judea, but he was as welcome in Christ's kingdom, as any Israelite.

The key to that entry door is faith in Jesus, trust *in him*.-----

And Jesus says to crowd, at the **heavenly banquet**, full of matchless joy and abundance; with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, there'll be this centurion and many Gentiles.

While the Jews, who thought they had a place reserved for them because Abraham was in their family tree, will be thrown out, and experience weeping and wailing, pain and distress - hell.-----

This crying *isn't* sorrow over sin, or grief that they *dishonoured* God, it is the painful experience of the just judgement of God on their sin.-----

And it is sobering. And scary.-----

I wonder, Are you going to be at the heavenly feast, or in the darkness weeping?-----

Do you think you have a reserved place in heaven?-----

If you know there is, How do you know?-----

I plead with you to place your whole trust in Jesus, if you have not, and you can be sure.-----

Coming back to Matthew 8 v13, Jesus says the centurion's servant *is healed* 'just as you believed it would'.

I ask, **what is this belief, this faith Jesus commends in v10&13?**-----

**When it comes to healing, what is the faith that God looks for and desires?---**

**Agnes Sanford**(SLIDE) was a world renowned spiritual healer, who wrote popular books on healing around 50 years ago.

Sanford speaks of, creating 'in myself the atmosphere of faith: the feeling that God *is answering* my prayer', then you make in the *imagination* a picture of the thing that you desire in prayer (you visualise it); then give thanks that God's power is entering and working toward wholeness.'

She says, 'Yes, you give thanks before you see *the healing*.' We don't ever need to *repeat* the prayer for healing, just keep giving thanks it is being accomplished.----- Because we *believe it, we receive* it.-----

Similar to this, **Dr David Yonggi Cho** (SLIDE) founder of the world's largest congregation in South Korea, suggested a similar method of, 'visualising the goal, then *incubating it into reality* by strength of faith'.-----

Other preachers and people today say too, you've just gotta have enough faith, and God will do it. That means if you're not healed, you didn't have enough faith.

But we must ask, Is this what the Bible means by faith?-----

Is this the faith Jesus praises in Matthew 8?-----

From the leper *and* the centurion we'd have to say, faith is not a certainty that God will do something, but a confidence that he can.

Not being certain he will do something, but a confidence that he can, v2, *and* confidence that he cares.-----

It's also faith in the power of Jesus' words.-----

Jesus said, 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever believes in him* shall not perish but have eternal life.' [Jn3.16]

Faith is believing those words.-----

And when you believe what Jesus says, and so trust him, you are saved.-----

Same *here*, faith is in the powerful word of Jesus to heal sickness.-----

We could say faith is trust in Jesus' power and compassion.-----

This brings us to our **final point, Jesus' Compassion and Power**.-----

From v14, we again see Jesus heal, but this time *without* any expressions of faith.

'When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying (sick) in bed with a fever', and what does Jesus *do*?

'He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.'

This helps us to see Jesus' compassion and concern for people, *doesn't it?*-----

And it tells us Jesus cares for the family of believers, he cares for our nearest and dearest.---

We see Jesus' compassion too in **v16**, Jesus healed all the sick who were brought to him, and the people possessed by demons were freed.

The evil spirits were expelled 'with a word'.

Again, the powerful word of Jesus healed them.-----

And why did he do all this?-----

Matthew says 'This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." **Isaiah 53v4**

While we often turn to Isaiah 53 as a prophecy of the cross of Christ, the Bible says this verse points to Jesus' earthly, healing ministry too.-----

What does it mean that **Jesus carried our diseases?**

Some pentecostals claim that on the cross our sicknesses n' diseases were also laid on Jesus, along with our sins.

So just as our sins have been taken away, so have our sicknesses.

Therefore, we Christians can claim any healing now, in Jesus' name.---

*Is that right?-----*

We would say Jesus' healings anticipate the cross, for they begin to roll-back the effects of sin, which Jesus came to die for.-----

Remember sickness entered the world as a result of the fall, as a consequence of our sin.

And we'd say on the cross, Jesus experienced the destructive power of disease's root cause, which is sin.-----

So on the cross Jesus did not have our sicknesses laid on him, but our sins.-----

On the cross he dealt with sin; and at his second coming, all sickness & disease will be carried away then.-----

Jesus carrying our diseases away is not all experienced now.-----

Those who claim Christians should never be sick because there's healing in the atonement, should also claim Christians should never die, because Jesus conquered death in the atonement.-----

The central message of the gospel is, Jesus conquered sin and the death it brings. It's good news of forgiveness now, not health now.-----

But we do have God's promise of full health in the life to come.-----

Full healing in the life to come, by God's power.-----

And yet God does answer prayers now doesn't he.

The Jesus of Matthew 8 is our Saviour, who wants us to trust that he *is powerful*, and he does care.

**So what about healing today?-----**

I KNOW God can and does heal, even suddenly and miraculously.-----

A man at my last church, **Tony Low (SLIDE)** had brain cancer 20 years ago, and it kept returning.

Tony's wife Ashley, her Mum was consulting mediums and getting Ashley to burn talismans, but things just got worse.

The cancer kept coming and going, despite meditation, despite new diets.-----

In 2006 Ashley came to Christ.

In 2008 Tony had a huge tumor, stage 4 brain cancer, and had been given 3 months to live.

A doctor said, "from head to toe you are cancer". It's spread everywhere.-----

After Ashley was baptised Tony collapsed and had emergency surgery where ¼ of his brain was cut out.

He was on life support then pronounced dead by 4 doctors.

But Ashley's pastor came and people prayed hard for him and believed that God *could* work a miracle.

Tony was a Buddhist. He'd heard the Gospel but didn't believe.

Yet in ICU he had the Lord Jesus appear & speak to him in a dream, and Tony believed, and he woke up a Christian.----- 😊

He was told he wouldn't be able to use his arms or legs again, but starting with his little finger he moved, and now walks, and he still lives.

His doctors were left speechless.

In 2013 a scan revealed his brain had *regenerated* and was 'whole again', which the doctors thought impossible.-----

Tony has since testified to the power of God, the mercy of Christ and his miraculous healing to many doctors, people and churches.

In Ashley's words, Tony's faith now is like a solid mountain.-----

Lennard was on the team of youth leaders I served with at Donvale Presy.----

In Ashley's words,

I know that not everyone who prays gets healed. I have a lot of questions about that. But every day I give thanks to the Lord, for this day belongs to the Lord, and He has given us breath to live another day. You may think that my husband's healing is the big miracle. But the biggest miracle is the fact that we can all find salvation in the Lord.-----

If you or a loved one is sick, or gets cancer, Can we, like some, promise they will be healed;- -- if they just *believe it*, believe it *enough*?----- No way!

God's word does *not promise everyone* physical healing in this life.-----

We are promised a healed relationship with God now and the presence of his Spirit now by faith, but not physical healing.

There are some things we just have to wait for.-----**(SLIDE)**

Still, we are to ask in faith, that is being completely confidence in Jesus' compassion and power.-----

And we will be healed if it is God's will; **James 4v15**.

Praying, "*If it is your will Lord*" doesn't destroy faith, it's not a cop-out, and it's not saying prayer makes no difference.

*It is about humbling ourselves, and entrusting ourselves to our totally sovereign, wise and good God.*

And that's exactly what the leper and centurion *both did*.

They humbled themselves. They asked for help, and they trusted Jesus.

When we pray and ask God for our own or someone *else's* healing, God wants us to trust that he can answer, and that he cares and will give us what is good.

As Jesus said in **Matt 7:11** – "your Father in heaven [will] give good gifts to those who ask him!"-----

It may not be what we ask for, but trust that it will be good for us, for our highest good and for *his glory*.-----

What might that mean?----

If you continue in pain, continue to be sick, or continue to struggle with disability, maybe God wants you to learn what the Apostle Paul did:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for *my power is made perfect in weakness*." (2Cor 12)

Maybe God wants you to be prepared to *comfort others* in similar troubles (2Cor 1).

Or to yet again learn to rely on Him and not yourself (2Cor 1).

Maybe it will '*prove your faith genuine and result in praise, and glory to Christ* (1Pet1).-----

Like the leper and the centurion, in your sickness, trust that Jesus always cares for his people, and he is always powerful.

Have faith that he is.-----

I close with some words from **Michelle who I mentioned at the start. She says, "My friend Linda grew up planning to become a medical missionary. She loves the Lord and wanted to serve Him as a doctor by taking the gospel to sick people in parts of the world where medical care is hard to find. But God had other plans.**

Linda has indeed *become* a medical missionary, not the way she expected. At age 14, Linda developed a chronic health problem that required her to be hospitalised for major surgery several times a year. She survived bacterial meningitis that left her in a coma for 2 weeks and blind for 6 months.

She once celebrated two birthdays in a row in the hospital — without going home in between. She has had several experiences when she was not expected to live. But yet Linda is the most vibrant, grateful and *cheerful* person you will ever meet.-----  
She once told me that her mission field, as she hoped and planned is the hospital.  
But instead of serving God as a doctor, she serves Him as a patient.-----  
No matter how sick she is, the light of the Lord radiates from her.  
Linda exemplifies the teaching of the apostle Peter. Despite her trials, she rejoices, and the genuineness of her faith brings 'praise, honour and glory' to Jesus Christ."----

So wrapped up in all the tears, sobbing and emotion of today Michelle says, I too want to bring praise, glory and honour to Jesus Christ through my life, whether that be on two feet or in a wheelchair.

Whether that be in life or death. I am not giving up.

He is more than able to heal, but if He doesn't I need to be okay with that too.-----

Let's pray that we can be too.