

Seeing Faith, Knowing Thoughts and Forgiving Sins

If you were raised in a Christian home, or went to church or Sunday school when you were younger, I'm sure this is a story that's familiar to many of you. It's about the man that was let down through the roof when Jesus was preaching in the House. We will start in Matthew Chapter nine and read the story beginning from verse one:

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, this man blasphemeth.

4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The Lord Jesus Christ had delivered a demon possessed man in a place near Gadara, around the Sea of Galilee. The people of that city had been more concerned about their pigs than they were for a man that was possessed of demons. The pigs ran into the sea when the demons went into them. The people who were upset about their pigs went and asked Jesus to simply, "Leave our community, leave our city, we don't want you here." Jesus will not stay where he is not welcome. He is a gentleman, and so he left. His disciples got back into the fishing boat, and they travelled across the Sea of Galilee to Christ's adopted hometown of Capernaum.

When he was at Capernaum, He went into house and was there speaking. He was bringing a message. So many people were in the house that nobody else could get in; it was jam-packed with folks. This event is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke – three times, and if you read all three stories, you get more and more detail.

There were four men who had a paralyzed friend, and they believed that if they could get their friend to Jesus that perhaps the Lord Jesus Christ would heal their paralyzed friend. So they put the man on a kind of a stretcher, and brought him to the house where Jesus was bringing this message. But when they arrived at the house, they discovered that they couldn't even get in because of the crowd. So they decided to do something different. They must not fail. They cannot quit. They're not going to give up on their friend. So they took the man on the stretcher

up to the roof of the house. It was a flat roof, and they begin to lift up some tiles. It was not a roof like we have here today. They began to lift up some tiles on the roof where Jesus was in the room below. They lowered the man on some ropes or maybe some of their own clothing that tied it to the stretcher, and lowered the man down to Christ, who was having a meeting in that house.

I'd like for us to notice three things from this passage this morning that indicate that the Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Heaven. He's the Lord from glory, and what He can do in our own lives.

KNOWING FAITH

There are some things that Jesus did on this occasion that are very unique. The first one is found in verse two, *“And behold they brought to him a sick man, a man sick of the palsy, a paralyzed man lying on the bed and Jesus sees their faith.”* Now if I were to walk over to you and just look at you, I cannot necessarily just by looking at you know whether you have faith or not, whether you have an interest in Jesus or not, whether you're a believer in Christ or not. I can't see that; I can't see your heart. I don't know. But the Lord Jesus Christ can see a person's faith.

He knows whether or not we believe in him; He knows our faith. He knows how deep that faith is. He knows who that faith is in, or the lack of faith. There are times in which somebody may even claim to have faith, and we wonder if they are really saved or not. We can't see the person's heart. But Jesus can see a person's faith.

Yet the truth is, when I read this story, and the more I read of it, the more I discover that I'm beginning to see their faith, too. Not their heart so much as what they did. I'm beginning to see the faith of five men, one on the stretcher, and four who brought him to Christ, as they bring this man to the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith enough to believe that Jesus Christ could help their friend if they brought their friend to Jesus. Faith enough to believe that if we just get this person to Jesus, then Jesus could help this person. The four men with the stretcher had already arrived at the conclusion that they couldn't help their friend become not paralyzed. But they could help him get to Jesus, and Jesus could do the healing -- if they could just get him to Jesus. They had **faith enough to take their friend to Jesus**. They didn't just sit home at that day, and say, “You know what...I think Jesus could help my friend”. They said, “You know what...we need to take our friend to Jesus.”

And I would challenge you if you have children at home to walk and live in such a way that you can bring your children to Jesus. You have people in your family or neighbors or friends that you would like to see come to know Christ? Then have enough faith to at least invite them to Jesus.

I see something else about their faith – **it was a creative faith.** They arrived at the house, and the house is so full of people they can't get in. What would you do this morning if you arrived here at church, and the church is just so full clear out to the door? There are so many people you can't get in the doorway, and what are you going to do? Are you going to chop a hole in the ceiling? Probably not, but this is a creative faith. Faith that overcame every obstacle. Faith that said we've got to do something different if we're going to get our friend to Jesus because the normal way, the traditional way of going into house doesn't work on this occasion. We're going to have to come up with something creative, something unique, and something extraordinary in order to get our friend in Jesus.

Earlier this year, it was really bothering me that our Sunday School just wasn't growing; we really weren't going anywhere with it. So I met with the board, and we met with the teachers; we got everybody together and we came up with Wally's Tree House – the Lord gave us that idea. It's a kind of a little bit different way of doing Sunday School, with creative decor in the room and creative by adding a children's choir. Creative with different people involved, and so on. We just came up with another way of doing it, and it seems to be working.

We didn't come up with this ministry, but we heard about the Reformers Unanimous ministry. The RU ministry. And the more I read about it, and the more we talk about it, this is a creative way of reaching people who are struggling in some way in their life, and reaching them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Helping them get victory. So this is a creative way of doing it.

Think of creative ways God lays upon your heart. Maybe somebody you're trying to reach. Somebody you're praying for you want to bring them to Jesus, and nothing's working so far. Just ask God to lay on your heart some creative way of reaching them. Some years ago, Walter Martin used to be a writer and author; he's with the Lord now. And Jehovah's Witnesses would come to his house. And he knew they really didn't know the true Jesus. They have a false Jesus, but it was very difficult for him to actually start a conversation. They just want to talk all the time. So he said to them, before I ever have a conversation about important things like Jesus, could we just have a word of prayer before the person would answer. As they were standing on his doorstep he'd say, "Our Father Jehovah God ..." and their heads go down and he prayed the gospel. He prayed how to be saved. He said, "Thank you for Jesus who died for our sins. was buried and rose again." And he began to pray the gospel. And he saw folks come to know the

Lord Jesus Christ. Many Jehovah's Witness came to know the true Jesus through his ministry – creative ways.

Something else about their faith; it was a **co-operative faith**. What do I mean by that? I mean there were there were four guys that carried the stretcher. There was one man who was paralyzed; he couldn't do anything and had to rely on other people. But they cooperated together, those four men, in order to get their friend to Jesus. A ministry is not just one person's ministry; it is the cooperation of God's people working together. I can't save people from their sins. Our church can't do it, but Jesus can. And so we cooperate together to bring people to Christ. That's what it's about. That's what church is about.

In fact, sin has made the sinner like that paralyzed man – incapable of getting to Jesus. The Bible says we are dead in trespasses and sin. A dead person doesn't have any ability at all, do they? So the Lord Jesus Christ would save us. But we need people to bring us to Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sins. We need the Bible to show us our need. But God uses people as well.

By the way, speaking about cooperative faith, the devil would like to destroy that cooperation. He sees what we're doing in Wally's Tree House, in the R.U. ministry, and other things. He would like to bring disharmony and disunity, because he doesn't want people to get saved. We need to be on guard there, so let's all humble ourselves before Him.

It was a **courageous faith!** What are people going to say if you start chopping up a roof? To lower somebody down into the meeting? To step out in courage and in boldness, and to do something unique and different in order to bring somebody to Jesus? It ended up in the Bible, because it's such an interesting story about people who had a courageous, cooperative, creative faith that says we've got to overcome every obstacle so we can get our friend to Jesus.

Now the more I look at the story, I see that Jesus saw their faith. But I'm beginning to see it, aren't you? I'm beginning to see their faith not by looking at the heart because I can't see their hearts, and I can't see your heart. But I'm beginning to see their faith in the works they're doing, and the life they're living. I'm beginning to see their faith in that way. In fact the Bible says the faith that doesn't produce works and evidence really isn't Biblical faith.

Look at this verse from James 2:17: *“Even so faith if it have not works,”* if there's no fruit, no evidence, *“is dead being alone”*. We can walk around talking - “I trust,” “I believe,” - but if our life says the exact opposite, then our faith is dead, being alone. Man may say. And you know all kinds of people say all kinds of things, and that's James' point. You can say whatever you want to say. Man may say, *“Thou hast faith, and I have works, show me thy faith without*

thy works.” How do you show faith without works? James says that's not possible. Here's what is possible. *“I will show thee my faith by my works.”* (James 2:18) I'm going to show you that I have faith in God by what I do, by how I live.

We know these men had faith, first of all, because Jesus says so. But we can also see it because they were willing to do whatever was necessary to bring their friend to Jesus Christ. They could have sat at home all day long, believing that Jesus could heal their friend, and nothing would have happened. They could have stayed home all day long praying for their friend, and nothing would have happened. But they had enough faith to say, “We’ve got to take a step here and take our friend to Jesus,” and Jesus saw that faith.

KNOWING THOUGHTS

I see something else in the passage this morning about the King Jesus, the King from Heaven, and it’s found in verse 4: *And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said wherefore think ye evil in your hearts.* When Jesus saw the faith of the four men that brought the other man to Jesus. And he walked over to the paralyzed man. And he looks down at this man (I believe he had faith too.). He said to this man, “Cheer up. Your sins are forgiven you. Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you.”

There were some religious folks there. Some scribes who studied the Bible, memorized the Bible, and wrote the Bible. But they didn’t know the God of the Bible. And they were very critical. They're standing there talking to themselves, not out loud, not to each other. Do you ever talk to yourself? They're talking to themselves in their minds, and saying, “He said he forgives this man’s sin, but only God can forgive a man's sin. For Jesus to say He forgives all this man sins is claiming to be God. Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy.” They’re thinking that in their heart. They’ve never said a word; they’re just thinking that.

The Bible says, *“Jesus knowing their thoughts,”* begins to address what they were thinking. “Why are you thinking those the evil things about me?” I don't know about you, but wouldn't it be kind of nervous to be around somebody who could tell you what you're thinking all the time? What if this morning I just pushed a button on your chair, and your thoughts were projected up here on the screen? How would you like that? I wouldn't like it. No way! Here's an interesting thing. The Lord Jesus Christ loves us anyway. Because I have to tell you – we don't have to go any farther than just our thought life to discover that we have sinned. Haven't we? We don't have to do anything, just our thought life betrays it. And yet He loves us, and He cares about us anyway. Jesus would be the Lord of your thoughts.

The Bible says in Philippians chapter two, “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*” Think like Jesus. Begin to think like He thought. Take control of your thought life. You know why we have so many problems in what we’re doing? It’s because we have so many problems with what we’re thinking. “Why are you thinking these things in your heart?” the Lord would ask us. So the Bible teaches us how to think differently.

For example here in Philippians chapter 4 verse 8 tells us what to think about. “*Think on these things*”. So let’s see what we’re supposed to be thinking about. “*Whatsoever things are true. Whatsoever things are honest. Whatsoever things are just. Whatsoever things are pure. Whatsoever things are lovely. Whatsoever things are of good report. If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*”.

So ask yourself a question. If I read this book, will I be thinking about things that are true, honest, just? If I watch this movie will I be thinking about things that are lovely, that are of good report, virtuous?

What am I putting into my thought life? What kind of friends am I hanging around with? What are their influences on my thought life? What am I watching on television? If I put garbage in, guess what’s going to be up there? Garbage, right? That’s what’s going to come out in your life. If you want to live better, you’ve got to think better. If you want to live godly, you have to think godly.

And Jesus knew their thoughts. So the King from heaven, when he was here, He could see whether people had faith or not. He knew because He knows everything. And He knew their thoughts. He knew what they were thinking. He addressed what they were thinking.

FORGIVING SINS

Then in verse 2 again, “*Son be of good cheer. Thy sins are forgiven thee.*” Jesus Christ can forgive us our sins. When the four men finally got their friend to Jesus, lowered him down through the roof, and he was lying there on the floor in that room, and Jesus is standing there and the house is crowded. Do you know the first thing that Jesus addressed was not the man’s physical condition, not the fact that the man was paralyzed. “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*” Because that’s always the priority with Jesus Christ. His first concern is not with where we are physically. His first concern is whether or not you are right with God.

The truth of the matter is we all have a sin problem. It’s taking us to hell; it’s taking us to judgment. It leaves us condemned. Jesus Christ has entered this world to come and to die for

our sins, to be buried, and to rise again -- that we could be forgiven. That we could be released. "Cheer up," He says to the man, "I've come here to deal with your sin. I want to forgive it. I want to release you from it."

The ministry, the life of Jesus and His death, is all about forgiveness. Ephesians 1:7, "*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to riches of His grace.*" Acts 13:38, "*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.*" Cheer up! You can get your sins forgiven; you can be right with God. The reason Christ addresses this first is because sin is really the root problem.

We always think it's something else, but sin is really the root problem. The sin and death process that entered the world through Adam is the real problem. So He addresses that first. You see we think that the problem is that this child is really badly behaved. And we look at the bad behavior. But you know what the real problem is? That little three letter word called "SIN". This child needs to be born again. This child needs to be saved by Jesus. This child needs to come to Christ. And not only that, they need to learn how to walk with Jesus and become more like Jesus.

We think the problem is our alcohol addiction. That's just a symptom. The real problem is a little three letter word called "SIN", right? Are we getting this? That person needs to be saved by Jesus, to come to Christ be born again, and learn how to walk with Jesus. And as they walk with Jesus, they get victory.

We think the problem is in the marriage, that it's her. And she says, "No, it's him." He says, "It's her." You know what it really is? It's a little three letter word called "SIN". We're selfish, and we're sinners. And mom and dad need to be saved, and they need to learn how to walk with God on a daily basis, and to have a devotional walk with the Lord and to be victorious.

You see we think the problem is anger in our life or bitterness or gossip. No, those are just symptoms. The real problem is that we need to be saved, and we need to learn how to yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit on daily basis, because as you yield yourself to the Spirit, guess what? The fruit of the Spirit are going to be there: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. If you're not living in the power of the Holy Spirit, what's left? -- The old fleshly nature. And Paul says that he was convinced that in our fleshly nature, we have no good thing.

So this man's first need was forgiveness. Get right with God first! God brought these five men, four who carry the stretcher and the one in the stretcher, **God brought them to a point of desperation!** They're all adults, and they've all travelled down the road together and have come to this conclusion. If our friend is going to ever get victory, there's one person in the whole world who can do that. It's not us; it's Jesus. And somehow we've got to get to Jesus. And we've got to do whatever's necessary to get to Jesus. When they got him to Jesus in their point of desperation, Jesus dealt with the man's sin, and then he's going to deal with the man's physical body.

Sometimes God brings you to a point of desperation. Where you just can't believe how crazy life has become. It might be a child; it might be your own marriage; it might be something else in your life, but it's a point of desperation. And you know what to do? I would advise you come to Jesus, and trust His shed blood to cleanse you from your sins. Start there. Get right with God -- and then learn how to walk with God through the Holy Scriptures.

When Jesus Christ said, "*Your sins are forgiven you,*" there were people already standing there that were critical of that. They were thinking critical thoughts, "That's not right; that's not good." But that didn't stop Jesus. Jesus says, "Which is harder?" What could you do? Could you walk over to somebody and say that your sins are forgiven you, and all of their sins would just automatically be gone? Or could you walk over to somebody who's paralyzed and say, "Rise, take up your bed and walk?" And then they're no longer paralyzed? Could you do either one of those? None of us can, but there's one person that can. And Jesus says "So you'll know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins," He says to the paralyzed man, "Stand up and walk". And that man who was paralyzed, who had to be let down by other men, stands up in the middle of that room that day and walks. Jesus says, "Now pick up your stretcher, pick up your bed there, pick up the little mat, and go home", and he did. Can you imagine what happened when that man went home that day? I don't know if he had a wife or not, but if he did, then what a changed house, because this man had come to Jesus! God wants to change your family, wants to change you, wants to change your life, if you will come to him. Verse eight says that God got the glory. And the people said, "Wow! Amazing!" And God got the glory. God wants to get the glory through your life. Will you come to Jesus?

Preached at Calvary Baptist Church of Sauk City, WI

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