



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Matthew 9:1-8 The Greatest Miracle

JULY 12, 2011

PASTOR FRANK ERB / (916) 412-7625 / www.capitolcom.org / FRANK.ERB@capitolcom.org

Matthew 9:1-8 *“Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city. And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, ‘Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.’ And some of the scribes said to themselves, ‘This fellow blasphemes.’ And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, ‘Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk?’ 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, pick up your bed and go home.’ And he got up and went home. But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.*

It is significant that Jesus’ initial reaction to a paralyzed man was not an expression of sympathy for his extreme physical malady, but rather concern for his spiritual condition. Why was this the case, given that Jesus was known for his unmatched compassion? Jesus, we see, understood that mankind’s greatest problem, by far, is sin.

Missing the Target

Unfortunately, many people misunderstand what sin is, and, therefore, completely underestimate its prevalence and seriousness. Most people, if they believe in sin at all, think of it as an occasional violation of religious norms, and usually harmless.

The word *sin* actually means, though, “to miss the target,” with the bulls-eye being God’s perfect righteousness. Sin is a systemic dysfunction that entered the world early on (Genesis 3), and with it came horrendous disorder, disease, decay, and death. We, as products of a sin-corrupted planet and species, have each been born with an innate (original) sin nature, and as such we manifest continually ungodly, unhealthy, and destructive values, thoughts, words, and behavior ... most

of the time without even being aware of it (see Romans 3).

If only we all realized how prevalent our own sin is. Maybe you’ve heard the story about a man who went to heaven. An angel met him at the gate and took him on a tour. He saw many clock-like objects with hands that move and tick somewhat every few moments or so ... and the gadgets had what appeared to be people’s names above them. The man asked the angel, “What are these all about?” The angel replied: “Why, they are ‘sinometers’ ... every time the person sins, the clock-hand moves one more notch to record the offence.” “Wow, the man replied. Where’s mine?” The angel replied, “Oh, yours is in the back room ... We use it for a fan!”

The Ultimate Sickness

Sin, though a spiritual, not physical, malady, operates within us very much like a serious disease. Charles Spurgeon, the famous 19th century British preacher, eloquently listed many ways this is so.¹

- *“Sin, like sickness, is very disabling. A sick man cannot carry burdens, climb mountains, run in service, walk with perseverance, or leap for joy. The occupations and pleasures of other men are things from which he is shut out. Even so does sin prevent our serving God.”*
- *“Sin, also, like certain diseases, is a very loathsome thing. Some diseases are so extremely disgusting that scarcely can their names be mentioned; but, oh, they are sweetness itself when compared with sin.”*
- *“Like some diseases, sin is fearfully polluting. As the leper cannot be tolerated abroad; as the plague-stricken are separated from their fellows, even so sin separates us from communion with God and holy beings.”*
- *“Sin too may be likened to many sicknesses from its being contagious. A man cannot be a sinner alone. There is a fierce contagiousness in every form of moral evil: like fire among stubble it spreads most rapidly.”*

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS DURING SESSION @ 7:45 A.M., ASSEMBLY RULES CONFERENCE ROOM (3171)

STAFF/LOBBYISTS: WEDNESDAYS DURING SESSION @ 12:00 NOON, ROOM 125

The Greatest Miracle

- *“Sin, moreover, like many diseases, is very painful; and yet, on the other hand, at certain stages it brings on a deadness, a numbness of soul preventing pain. The most of men are unconscious of the misery of the fall.”*
- *“The disease of sin is deep-seated, and has its throne in the heart. ... It has entered the marrow, the very core and centre of our being...”*
- *“It is in its own nature wholly incurable. ... Man cannot cure himself. He may reform, he may drive the disease inward, and prevent it coming out upon the skin; he may so model, and guide, and restrain himself, that the coarser forms of sin which are condemned among men may not appear in him; but the virus, the essential poison of sin, no man can ever extract from his own heart, nor can another man do it for him.”*
- *“It is a mortal disease. It kills not just now, but it will kill ere long. Not merely shall the body die as the result of sin, but the soul must be killed for ever with eternal wrath.”*

The Most Wonderful Remedy

Thankfully, God has not left us to ourselves. His son Jesus came, lived a perfectly holy life, and then died in order to atone for our sin. This was a payment that was required (*Hebrews 9:22* “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”) and that only he could make. Now that the penalty has been paid, God’s forgiveness can be extended to all who will receive it.

People often tell me that they don’t believe that Jesus is the only way to God. The question I have for them is, “Then, what will you do about your sin?” It’s an essential question, since only He died for us. (See *Acts 4:12*, *10:43*, *Colossians 1:13-14*.)

The Greatest Doctor

Jesus has been called the Great Physician. When he was ridiculed for spending so much time with obviously immoral people, his reply was *“It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick*

(Matthew 9:12).” As the Great Physician, he does his work well: His cures are “very speedy,” “radical,” “sure and certain,” and “the disease never returns.”² When God forgives our sin he casts them “into the depths of the sea,” never to be seen again (*Micah 7:19*, *Psalms 103:12*). This must be the greatest miracle of all!

Running to His Arms

Has he forgiven your sins? If you know that he has, then you are no doubt rejoicing in that fact still, and endeavoring to live a life of gratitude in response. You may not have a dramatic conversion story, but if you have really trusted in Him, the greatest miracle of all has taken place in your life. If you are not sure, call out to Him today and request his forgiveness. He promised, *“Come unto me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*. Consider this moving description, from more than a century ago, of how refreshing this can be.

“A dear friend of mine who was quite a lover of the hunt, told me the following story. ‘Rising early one morning,’ he said, ‘I heard the barking of a number of dogs chasing deer. Looking at a large open field in front of me, I saw a young fawn making its way across the field and giving signs that its race was almost run. It leaped over the rails of the enclosed place and crouched within ten feet of where I stood. A moment later two of the hounds came over, and the fawn ran in my direction and pushed its head between my legs. I lifted the little thing to my breast, and, swinging round and round, fought off the dogs. Just then I felt that all the dogs in the West could not and would not capture the fawn after its weakness had appealed to my strength.’ So is it, when human helplessness appeals to Almighty God. I remember well when the hounds of sin were after my soul, that at last, I ran into the arms of Almighty God.”³

¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “The Great Physician and His Patients,” a sermon based on Matthew 9:12.

² Ibid.

³ A.C. Dixon, quoted in E.M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, p. 1.