



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Matthew 9 Help for the Helpless

AUGUST 17, 2011

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Have you ever faced a problem that appeared too big for you to handle? You may not want to admit it, but we all feel this way at some point. You may face seemingly insurmountable challenges in your work. (I remember meeting with a legislator years ago when the budget crisis was heating up, and he confided in me that he and many of his colleagues were truly stumped as to a workable remedy for our state's financial predicament.) Or, you may face challenges with your family. (Many leaders have lamented the painful collapse of their marriage or their lack of connection with their children.) Or, perhaps your struggle is with your health. (We have all known people who felt perfectly healthy one day but discovered the next that they were anything but that.)

Matthew Chapter 9 is a great reminder that God is able to help the helpless, and in fact He delights in doing so. Consider the many helpless people we read about in this chapter.

- In 9:1-8, Jesus healed a paralyzed man. Paralysis is something no person would ever want to face. When I was in my early 20's, my father had a major stroke that completely immobilized him for years, ending ultimately in his death. I well remember the suffering he went through. When Jesus encountered a paralyzed man, however, he completely and instantly healed him.
- In 9:20-22, Jesus healed a woman who had suffered from a debilitating menstrual problem for twelve long years. She had spent her life savings on the best medical treatments of her day, all no avail (Mark 5:26). Besides her immense physical suffering (which no doubt included intense pain, anemia and fatigue) and her associated poverty, she endured complete social isolation, as specified by the Mosaic law (Leviticus 15:25-27). Despite the magnitude of her situation, she was healed instantly when she trusted in Christ and merely touched the edge of his clothing.

- In 9:27-31, Jesus restored sight to two blind men. Blindness was commonplace in the ancient world, as it still is in third world countries today where modern medical care is unavailable. There was absolutely no earthly solution for their malady, but Jesus healed their eyes with a gentle touch.
- In 9:32-33, Jesus restored speech to a man who was mute due to demonization.
- In 9:18-26, Jesus even brought a recently deceased twelve-year-old girl back to life, much to the astonishment and joy of her friends and family.
- In 9:9-13, Jesus called Matthew to follow Him. This man, as the local tax collector for a corrupt government, was no doubt the most despised man in town and the last person most would have expected Jesus to select for his inner circle.

PRINCIPLES WE CAN LEARN FROM THESE EXAMPLES:

1. Absolutely no problem is too big for God.

Paralysis, gynecological ailments, blindness, muteness, and of course death, were all impossible to remedy in the first century world, but they were no challenge whatsoever for Jesus. Whatever problem you face today, it is not too much for the Lord to handle.

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." - Abraham Lincoln

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

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

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

Help for the Helpless

2. No one is ineligible to receive God's help.

The bleeding woman (9:18-22) was religiously unclean and isolated, but Jesus responded to her frail touch. Matthew, a corrupt and sinful man, was given a fresh start. You may not feel like you are worthy of God's help, but he cares about you. *John 6:37 "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."*

3. All who humbly look to the Lord receive from Him.

The old adage (often mistakenly ascribed to the Bible) says that "God helps those who help themselves," but actually nothing could be further from the truth.¹ In each of the examples in Matthew 9, someone recognized his seemingly hopeless plight and cried out to Jesus. Only then did he receive help. It is the same for us. *Proverbs 28:26 NIV says "Those who trust in themselves are fools."* Are you willing to humbly bring your need to him?

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It is also not enough to merely acknowledge that we believe in Him and desire his help. We must act on our faith by looking to Him. Notice the emphasis on faith in action in verses 2, 9, 18, 22, 29.

The result? God may remove your difficulty, or He may instead, as is often the case, give you extra strength or wisdom to handle it. Either way, he wants to help, and he is able to do so. *Psalm 55:22 "Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken."*

4. Our greatest need is spiritual.

Jesus did not, of course, heal the entire world of sickness, suffering, and death. As residents of a fallen world, we all experience these difficulties. The day is coming though when God will do put an end to them forever. *Revelation 21:4 "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

Until that wonderful day, the Lord is most concerned with healing our greatest problem – our sin. When Jesus healed the paralytic in Matthew 9:6, he explained that he did so in order to prove that he also "has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6). Then, in Matthew 9:12, he alluded to the fact that we are all terminally "sick" with sin, and only he is the "physician" who has the cure we require.

None of us are worthy to receive his forgiveness. In fact, God only gives this gift to those who know they don't deserve it. He said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners,"* which includes us all (Matthew 9:13, see also Luke 18:9-14, Romans 5:6).

With regard to our salvation, we are all helpless, but not hopeless. God will always hear and answer a sincere, humble, repentant request for forgiveness of sins through Christ. *Romans 10:13 "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."* Happy are those who recognize their need for help and come to Him to receive such a priceless gift.

I urge you to bring your problems to the Lord today.

¹ *This saying is also often credited to Benjamin Franklin since it is quoted in his Poor Richard's Almanac in 1757. It is, however, found earlier in a 1698 article titled Discourses Concerning Government by Algernon Sydney. It is true that God is pleased when we use for good all that He has given us, including our intelligence, industriousness, strength, and wealth, and He will not bless laziness (Matthew 25).*