

Bible Study August 6, 2025

MATTHEW 8 (AMPLIFIED BIBLE)

Jesus Cleanses a Leper; The Centurion's Faith

¹ When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. ² And a leper came up to Him and bowed down before Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You are able to make me clean (well)." ³ Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Leprosy was a terrifying disease because there was no known cure. In Jesus' day, the Greek word for "leprosy" was used for a variety of similar diseases, and some forms were contagious. For those who contracted the contagious type, a priest would declare them unclean and banish them from their home and city. They were sent to live in a community with others who had the disease until they either got better or died. Yet when this man who had leprosy begged Jesus to heal him, Jesus reached out and touched him, even though his skin was covered with the dreaded disease.

Sin is also an incurable disease—and we all have it. Only Jesus' healing touch can miraculously take away our sin and restore us to real living. But first, just like a person with leprosy, we must realize our inability to cure ourselves and ask for Jesus' saving help.

⁴ And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one [about this]; but go, show yourself to the priest [for inspection] and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony (evidence) to them [of your healing]."

The law required a person healed of leprosy to be examined by the priest (Leviticus 14). Jesus wanted this man to give his story firsthand to the priest to prove that his leprosy was completely gone so that he could be restored to his community.

⁵ As Jesus went into Capernaum, a centurion came up to Him, begging Him [for help], ⁶ and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, with intense and terrible, tormenting pain."

The Roman officer could have let many obstacles stand between him and Jesus—pride, doubt, money, language, distance, time, self-sufficiency, power, race. But he didn't. If he did not let these barriers block his approach to Jesus, we don't need to either. What blocks you from coming to Jesus?

⁷ Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ But the centurion replied to Him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man subject to authority [of a higher rank], with soldiers subject to me; and I say to one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, He was amazed and

said to those who were following Him, “I tell you truthfully, I have not found such great faith [as this] with anyone in Israel. ¹¹ I say to you that many [Gentiles] will come from east and west, and will sit down [to feast at the table, and enjoy God’s promises] with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven [because they accepted Me as Savior], ¹² while the sons and heirs of the kingdom [the descendants of Abraham who will not recognize Me as Messiah] will be thrown out into the outer darkness; in that place [which is farthest removed from the kingdom] there will be weeping [in sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [in distress and anger].”

This Roman officer (also called a centurion) was a career military officer in the Roman army with control over 100 soldiers. Roman soldiers in particular were hated by the Jews for their typical mistreatment, oppression, and ridicule of Jewish people. Yet this hated Gentile’s faith amazed Jesus and put to shame the pompous piety of many of the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus told the crowd that many religious Jews who should be in the Kingdom would be excluded because of their lack of faith. Entrenched in their religious traditions, they could not accept Jesus and his new message. We must be careful not to become so set in our religious ways that we think we know all about God and then expect him to work only in our specified ways. Don’t let your mind-set and strong opinions limit your faith in God.

Faithful people of God from “all over the world” will be gathered to feast with the Messiah (Isaiah 25:6; 55). The Jews should have known that when the Messiah came, his blessings would also be for Gentiles (see Isaiah 66:12, 19). But this message came as a shock because they were too wrapped up in their own affairs and destiny. In claiming God’s promises for ourselves, we must never apply them so personally or culturally that we forget to see what God wants to do to reach all the people he loves.

Matthew emphasizes this universal theme: Jesus’ message is for everyone. The Old Testament prophets knew this (see Isaiah 56:3, 6-8; 66:12, 19; Malachi 1:11), but many Jewish leaders in the time of Jesus chose to ignore it. Each individual has to choose to accept or reject the Good News, and no one can become part of God’s Kingdom on the basis of heritage or connections. Having Christian parents is a wonderful blessing, but it won’t guarantee you eternal life. You must decide for yourself to believe in and follow Jesus.

¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it will be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was restored to health at that very hour.

Peter’s Mother-in-law and Many Others Healed

¹⁴ When Jesus went into Peter’s house [in Capernaum], He saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand and the fever left her; and she got up and served Him.

Peter's mother-in-law gives us a beautiful example to follow. Her response to Jesus' touch was to wait on Jesus and his disciples—immediately. Has God ever helped you through a dangerous or difficult situation? If so, you should ask, How can I express my gratitude to him? Because God has promised us all the rewards of his Kingdom, we should look for ways to serve him and his followers now.

¹⁶ When evening came, they brought to Him many who were under the power of demons; and He cast out the evil spirits with a word, and restored to health all who were sick [exhibiting His authority as Messiah], ¹⁷ so that He fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES [upon Himself] AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.”

Matthew continues to show Jesus' kingly nature. Through a single touch, Jesus healed (8:3, 15); when he spoke a single word, evil spirits fled his presence (8:16). Jesus has authority over all evil powers and all earthly diseases. He also has the power and authority to conquer sin. Sickness and evil are consequences of living in a fallen world. But in the future, when God removes all sin, there will be no more sickness or death. Jesus' healing miracles were a taste of what the whole world will one day experience in God's Kingdom.

Discipleship Tested

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to cast off for the other side of the Sea of Galilee. ¹⁹ Then [on His way to board the boat] a scribe [who was a respected and authoritative interpreter of the Law] came and said to Him, “Master, I will accompany You [as Your student] wherever You go.” ²⁰ Jesus replied to him, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Following Jesus is not always easy or comfortable. Often it comes at great cost and sacrifice, with no earthly rewards or security. Jesus didn't have a place to call home. You may find that following him costs you popularity, friendships, leisure time, or treasured habits. But while the cost of following Jesus is high, the value of being his disciple is even higher. Discipleship is an investment that lasts for eternity and yields incredible rewards.

²¹ Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father (collect my inheritance).” ²² But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me [believing in Me as Master and Teacher], and allow the [spiritually] dead to bury their own dead.”

This disciple may not have been asking for permission to go to his father's funeral but rather to put off following Jesus until his elderly father died. Perhaps he was the firstborn son and wanted to be sure to claim his inheritance. Maybe he didn't want to face his father's wrath if he left the family business to follow an itinerant preacher. Whether his concern was financial security, family approval, or something else, he did not want to commit himself to Jesus just yet. Jesus, however, would not accept his excuse.

Jesus was always direct with those who wanted to follow him. He made sure they counted the cost and set aside any conditions they might have for following him. As God's Son, Jesus did not hesitate to demand complete loyalty. Even family loyalty was not to take priority over the demands of obedience to him. His direct challenge forces us to ask ourselves about our own priorities in following him. The decision to follow Jesus should not be put off, even though other loyalties compete for our attention. Nothing should be placed above a total commitment to living for him.

²³ When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

The boat used here was probably the kind familiar to many of Jesus' disciples who were fishermen. Josephus, an ancient historian living during the time of the apostles, wrote that there were usually more than 300 fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee at one time. This boat was large enough to hold Jesus and his 12 disciples and was powered both by oars and sails. During a storm, however, the sails would have been taken down to keep them from ripping and to make the boat easier to control.

²⁴ And suddenly a violent storm arose on the sea, so that the boat was being covered by the waves; but Jesus was sleeping.

The Sea of Galilee is an unusual body of water. Although relatively small (13 miles long and 8 miles wide), it is 150 feet deep at its deepest point, and the shoreline is about 690 feet below sea level. Sudden storms can appear over the surrounding mountains with little warning, stirring the water into violent 20-foot waves. These experienced fishermen had not foolishly set out in a storm. They were caught without warning, and their danger was very real.

²⁵ And the disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Lord, save us, we are going to die!"

Although the disciples had witnessed many miracles, they panicked in this storm. As experienced sailors, they knew its danger; what they did not know was that Jesus could control the forces of nature. We often encounter storms in our lives where we feel God can't or won't work. When we truly understand who God is, however, we will realize that he controls both the storms of nature and the storms of the troubled heart. Jesus' power that calmed this storm can also help us deal with the problems we face. And he is with us. Jesus is willing to help if we only ask him. We should never discount his power even in terrible trials.

²⁶ He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was [at once] a great and wonderful calm [a perfect peacefulness]. ²⁷ The men wondered in amazement, saying, "What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Jesus Casts Out Demons

²⁸ When He arrived at the other side in the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs met Him. They were so extremely fierce and violent that no one could pass by that way.

The region of the Gadarenes is located southeast of the Sea of Galilee, near the town of Gadara, one of the most important cities of the region. Gadara was a member of the Ten Towns, towns with independent governments that were largely inhabited by Gentiles. This explains the herd of pigs (Matthew 8:30)—the Jews did not raise pigs because pigs were considered unclean and thus unfit to eat.

Demon-possessed people are under the control of one or more demons. Demons are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against God and are now evil spirits under Satan's control. They help Satan tempt people to sin and have great destructive powers. But whenever they are confronted by Jesus, they lose their power. These demons recognized Jesus as God's Son (8:29), but they didn't think they had to obey him. Just believing is not enough. Faith is more than belief. By faith, you accept what Jesus has done for you, receive him as the only one who can save you from sin, and follow him by obeying his commands.

Matthew says there were two demon-possessed men, while Mark and Luke mention only one. Apparently Mark and Luke mention only the man who did the talking.

According to Jewish ceremonial laws, the men Jesus encountered were unclean in three ways: (1) they were Gentiles (non-Jews), (2) they were demon possessed, and (3) they lived in the tombs. Jesus helped them anyway. We should not turn our backs on people who are "unclean" or repulsive to us or who violate our moral standards and religious beliefs. Instead, we must realize that every human individual is a unique creation of God, needing to be touched by his love

²⁹ And they screamed out, "What business do we have [in common] with each other, Son of God? Have You come to torment us before the appointed time [of judgment]?"

The Bible tells us that at the end of the world the devil, and presumably his fallen angels, will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 20:10). When the demons asked if Jesus had come to torture them "before God's appointed time," they showed that they knew God would judge them in the future.

³⁰ Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was grazing. ³¹ The demons began begging Him, "If You drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." ³² And He said to them, "Go!" So they came out [of the men] and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and died in the water.

When the demons entered the pigs, they drove the animals into the sea. The demons' action proves their destructive intent—if they could not destroy the men, they would destroy the pigs. Jesus' action, by contrast, shows the value he places on each human life.

³³ The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the men under the power of demons. ³⁴ And the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their region.

Why did the people ask Jesus to leave? Unlike their own pagan gods, Jesus could not be contained, controlled, or appeased. They feared Jesus' supernatural power, a power that they had never before witnessed. And they were upset about losing a herd of pigs more than they were glad about the deliverance of the demon-possessed men. Are you more concerned about property or programs than people? Human beings are created in God's image and have eternal value. How foolish and yet how easy it is to value possessions, investments, and even animals above human life. Would you rather have Jesus leave you than finish his work in you?