

## MATTHEW 9

## LABORERS NEEDED IN THE HARVEST!

“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” (verse 2). An effectual faith was doubtless discerned here by Christ – both in the sick man himself, as well as in those who brought him. And the words with which the healing was announced were graciously adapted to fill him and them – and us! – with the cheerfulness of spiritual joy. The fact that sin may be forgiven in any way is the most encouraging of all tidings to a sinner!

But nearby stood some of the scribes, who were more ready to frame objections from what they heard, rather than derive any profitable instruction therefrom. These men said within themselves, “This man blasphemeth.” Yet our Lord proved to them that He knew their secret thoughts. He then put the question to them whether the one thing was as easy as the other – to forgive sins, or to make the sick man arise and walk. He meant to show them, of course, that both were equally easy to God; and that through God alone, either of them could be done. Then in order to show that He was indeed God, and not a mere man, He made it manifest that He could do either! He “saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (verse 6). And the man “arose, and departed to his house” (verse 7). The forgiveness of sins could not be seen, and so the scribes felt that they might be bold enough to question it. But the rising up of the sick man, the recovery of his strength, the taking up of his bed, and his walking home – as for these things, they could not deny that they had taken place. Thus the conclusion could not be resisted, that His Word which was fulfilled in one case was also fulfilled in the other; and that the Son of Man did indeed have “power on earth to forgive sins.” How blessed we are that there is mercy with God through Christ! He died to save us, and so we have hope through His blood.

Matthew, the human penman of the very Gospel that we are now studying, was called to be an Apostle when he was sitting at the tax-collector’s table. All taxes and customs that were due to the Roman government used to be collected by certain persons called publicans; and these men, after paying over the fixed amount required by the government, were permitted to pocket the extra money that they had charged. Thus it came to be that the more money they squeezed from the people, the larger profit they made; and so they were often tempted to be guilty of extortion. Accordingly, they were very generally disliked.

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The healing of the palsied man – verses 1-8*
- ❖ *The calling of Matthew the tax collector – verses 9-17*
- ❖ *The healing of the ruler’s daughter and another woman as well – verses 18-26*
- ❖ *The healing of two blind men and the casting out of a demon – verses 27-34*
- ❖ *The Savior’s compassion for the sheep without a shepherd – verses 35-38*



Yet it was from this obnoxious class that our Lord selected one of His own immediate followers (verse 9). Furthermore, He allowed many other persons of the same description to sit and dine with Him at the meal in Matthew's home, to which the repentant publican invited Him (verse 10). Hereupon the Pharisees took offence (verse 11), asking the disciples, "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" The Savior did not disdain the company of sinners, because it was to heal and save such persons that He came down from heaven. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," said He.

In the healing of the woman mentioned in verses 18-26, it was not her touching of the Savior's garment that healed her. It was her faith, and this faith is within our reach also. Although we do not enjoy the same privilege of physically touching or beholding Christ, we may rejoice because we have no less access to the benefits of His heavenly healing. Let us be firmly persuaded that in Him, there is a Divine virtue to remove all our infirmities. This miracle took place while our Lord was on His way to the ruler's house – whose name, according to one of the other Gospels, was Jairus. He came to Jesus, pleading on behalf of his daughter, who was "even now dead" (verses 18-26). But when Jesus arrived at the ruler's house, He went in and "took her by the hand, and the maid arose."

In the miracle of the healing of the two blind men (verses 27-31), we may observe how true faith depends on the inward disposition, rather than on mere outward advantages. These two men were not able to see the miracles which Christ had worked. Yet even though they were blind, they persevered in following Him – and they were healed! And they were the first recorded persons to address Him by the title of the Messiah: "Son of David!"

In verses 35-38, we read that Jesus "saw the multitudes," and He "was moved with compassion on them." The masses of mankind, as they labor under darkness and ignorance, may be objects of scorn to the worldly mind; but by the enlightened Christian, Who has the mindset of their loving Master, they are viewed with affectionate concern, as sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." Great are the numbers who might be brought, by proper care and attention, into the kingdom of heaven; but alas! – few are those who are employed in the good work. Let us apply ourselves, therefore – by prayer and all other means in our power – to promote the sending forth of more laborers into this spiritual harvest! And let us also pray for grace to help forward the cause of Christ ourselves. Then we may be glad that we have aided in the salvation of our brothers and sisters here on earth; and we shall be summoned hereafter, as faithful laborers, to receive the wages of everlasting life!

*Thank You, Lord Jesus, for bringing to frail man the joyful news of forgiveness through Your precious blood! Amen.*

