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The Greatest Authority of All Authorities (II); Matt 9:1-8

GPBC

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Introduction – Last week I introduced this text by saying that the Bible calls us over and over to read the Bible and see Jesus and view life through eternal lenses rather than earthly lenses. If we keep our heads down and our eyes fixed on the immediate, we will miss the wonder of Scripture, the joy of the gospel, the glory of Christ, and the purpose and meaning of life. Viewing everything through eternal lenses brings everything into sharp, clear focus.

III. Optometrist vision test. 1 or 2? Which helps us see reality clearer, earthly or eternal?

Now apply that Big Picture view of life and the Bible to the healing ministry of Jesus. If we simply read these texts with earthly lenses we will conclude that Jesus means to heal us of every illness if we would just come to Him and believe like these people in the Bible believed. If our faith is strong enough, Jesus will heal me too. Many people read the Bible with earthly lenses and so understand these texts that way. Many teachers teach these texts that way, and as a result, many people have had their faith crushed, have grown discouraged and disheartened with themselves and God because their faith never seems to measure up, and now doubt that God is good or even cares. Earthly lenses shrivel faith because that's not how the Bible was intended to be read.

If however we read these texts with eternal lenses, we still believe that Jesus has the power and authority to heal today. We pray and ask Him to heal believing that He can, but we also know if He chooses not to do so, it is not because we haven't mustered up enough faith. It is not because God is not good or able. It is because God has a greater purpose than temporary healing. In fact, every time God does heal today and every time Jesus healed in the Bible, it is pointing us to something greater and more glorious and more lasting! Eternal lenses.

- I. How the Authority of Jesus to Heal Demonstrates His Authority to Forgive Sins
 - a. We begin to see there's a bigger picture here with Jesus' healing ministry when Matthew gives us another instance of Jesus healing a

paralytic. We've already seen Jesus heal a paralytic in ch8, so we already know Jesus has authority over the body. He has the power to reverse disability to the degree that the body functions as if it never was disabled. That in itself shows us a great deal about Jesus.

- i. It demonstrates His authority over the physical realm.
 - ii. It demonstrates His power to reverse the corruption of sin.
 - iii. It gives a glimpse of His eternal intent to make all things new.
- b. But there's more. Jesus' healing ministry shows us that He is the long-awaited Promised One who came to save us forever. That's why when the paralytic came to Jesus for healing, Jesus did something far greater. He worked a greater work of grace. He forgave the man's sins. He did something of far more consequence than give him the ability to walk. He gave him the ability to walk with God forever.
- c. Matthew had already made that point in 8:17 by quoting Isaiah 53.
- d. Jesus now makes that point unmistakably clear in first forgiving the paralytic, then answering the scribes' charge of blasphemy, and finally healing the paralytic to prove His authority to forgive sins.
- e. When Jesus asks, "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'" We are misreading the question if we try to answer it as a direct question rather than a rhetorical question.
- i. If we try to reason that saying "Your sins are forgiven" is easier because that's an invisible work that can't be seen or it's easier to say "Rise and walk" and then if he doesn't, it's his fault for not having enough faith, both of those answers are wrong.
 - ii. Jesus is asking which of these are easier to say because you have the ability to make it happen.
 - iii. It's rhetorical because both of these sayings are impossible for men. Neither one is easier than the other, both are impossible. So now we're getting to the point Jesus is making.
- f. Jesus' answer in v6 clarifies His question in v5 – "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —He then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."
- i. To prove to you that I am the Son of Man so I have the authority to say Your sins are forgiven and make it happen, I'm going to show you my authority to say Rise and walk and make it happen.

- ii. I'm going to do what is impossible for you to do, I'm going to say Rise and walk and make it happen, so that you will know I can also do what is impossible for you to do, I can say your sins are forgiven and make it happen.
 - g. So everything hangs on what happens next! By Jesus' question in v5, he places the scribes right where they truly are – totally dependent upon God. By His statement in v6, Jesus points to Himself as God by claiming the divine authority to do the impossible. If He can do the one impossibility for man, then it proves He can also do the other impossibility for man. If He can't do the one, He can't do the other. If it is impossible for Him, then He too is just a man. Everything hangs on what happens next.
 - h. V7.
- II. What the Crowds Understood and What We Can Learn From It
 - a. They understood that God had just done something. And they were afraid. By what was just said and what they just witnessed with their own eyes, they knew God was near.
 - i. When we read this text with earthly lenses we wonder why were they afraid? Why didn't they start shouting and clapping and rejoicing and dancing? Why were they afraid when something so wonderful had just happened?
 - ii. And the answer is precisely because something so wonderful had just happened.
 - iii. You see my friends we tend to fear what we should not fear. We fear what people think of us. We fear what people may do to us. We fear what may happen to us, as if God is not in control and watching over us. As if He does not have all authority in heaven and on earth. As if He is not our heavenly Father.
 - iv. And we tend to not fear what we should fear. We tend to have no fear of God. And that lack of holy fear becomes crystal clear in our lives by the way we act, by the way we talk, by the things we do, by the priorities we set. When we belittle sin, when we elevate self, when we push the things of God down the ladder of priorities, when we settle for less than God's will,

when we prefer something other than God's will, we show we're missing eternal lenses.

- v. We can learn from the crowds a holy, healthy, wondrously satisfying and faith-stimulating awe-struck fear of the awesome majesty, power, authority, presence, and sovereignty of God over all!
- b. They glorified God. They gave the glory to God for what had just taken place. That is precisely the ultimate end of all things, of Jesus' healing ministry, of Jesus' saving ministry – Phil 2 “Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- c. We can learn from the crowd to give God the glory. BTW – if we rightly fear Him, we can't help but glorify Him!

III. What the Crowds Misunderstood and What We Can Learn From It

- a. Their fear was right – they knew God had just done something. They put the praise in the right place – they glorified God. But they missed the very same thing that the scribes refused to see.
- b. They missed that God had just done something wonderful right in front of them because God was right in front of them!
- c. They overlooked through earthly lenses what Jesus had just made abundantly clear to see if you look upon Him with eternal lenses.
- d. They glorified God, but for the wrong reason. God had not given such authority to men – that was Jesus' entire point. Man can't do either one! The Son of Man, however, God in the flesh, can do both.
- e. It wasn't authority God had given to men, it was divine authority on display in the Son of Man.
- f. They got the connection Jesus was making. They understood if God can make a paralytic walk, He can forgive sins. They got the connection. They missed the application. God has not given the authority to forgive sins to men. We can forgive one another of wrongs done to us, but we cannot forgive another of wrongs done to God! The application was this: Since this man made the paralytic walk, this man is no mere man; He is the Son of Man.
- g. This isn't the first time the crowds have gotten it wrong. 7:28-29. They recognized the authority of His teaching. They failed to recognize it wasn't given or derived; it was His.

- h. They failed here to recognize Jesus was not the first among many men who could forgive sins; He is the only one who can forgive sins. He's the only one who can say either one and make them happen!

Conclusion