

Chapters 8 - 9 of Matthew present ten miracles of our Lord, all designed to manifest His deity and sovereign authority. His preaching was with authority (Matt. 7:29), and the miracles He performed demonstrated His authority over disease, nature, demons, and over all things physical and spiritual. There is somewhat of a progression in the way the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to arrange the written report of these miracles. First, Christ healed a leper by putting His hand upon the one who was diseased, proving both His power to heal the disease and His impeccability. He could not be defiled by the disease He healed. Though He bore our sins in His own body on the cross, He did and could not be contaminated or corrupted by our sins. Our sins were imputed to Him but not imparted into Him. Second, He cured the servant of the centurion without a touch, in fact, without even seeing the one He healed. In Christ, we see the power of God's thoughts and Word. Third, He healed Peter's mother-in-law who was sick with a fever by touching her hand, and she immediately arose from her sick bed and began to serve Him. The moment heals us of our spiritual depravity and death, we arise in His grace and power to serve Him acceptably as motivated by grace, love, and gratitude (Rom. 7:4-6). Fourth, He commanded the winds and the waves to be calm and saved His disciples from death. As our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, Christ calmed the winds and waves of God's wrath against us and saved us from eternal death. Fifth, He showed His power over evil spirits, casting out thousands of demons. When Christ sends His Spirit to make the Gospel the power of God unto salvation for us, we freed from Satan's power to blind and deceive us to the truth of salvation by God's grace in Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

We will see here another miracle involving Christ's power to heal physical ailments to point us to a much greater miracle that only can be accomplished by the God in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. Here, the Lord will manifest His deity by showing He has power to forgive sins. He alone is the Savior Who can deal with our guilt that separates us from God. All the physical miracles were wonderful as He relieved miseries of the flesh. However, in curing the sick, the real problem of the sins that caused sickness and death was not cured. Those whom He cured physically would get sick again and die (Rom. 6:23a). But to cure the real problem of our sin and depravity is the greatest miracle of all as it brings spiritual and eternal healing for all for whom Christ redeemed by His blood (Rom. 6:23b).

(Matt. 9:1) - *“AND HE ENTERED INTO A SHIP, AND PASSED OVER, AND CAME INTO HIS OWN CITY”* - Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4), raised and educated in Nazareth (Matt. 2:23), but He established His headquarters in Capernaum (Matt. 4:12-13). Though this city was privileged to be the place of His dwelling, and though the people witnessed so many of His miracles, yet the majority of the people remained in unbelief (Matt. 11:23-24). When we read the accounts of this in Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26, we get the full story of this great and miraculous event. The Lord went back to Capernaum and was teaching in a private house. Multitudes came to hear Him including several Pharisees and scribes. The house was so crowded that many had to stand outside to listen.

(Matt. 9:2) - Some men *“BROUGHT TO HIM A MAN SICK OF THE Palsy, LYING ON A BED”* - We learn from Mark and Luke that they put the sick man on a stretcher, carried him to the roof, and let him down through a hole that they made. It should be noted that many people back then (and even some today) attributed sickness and adversity to some specific sin(s) (Job 4:7; John 9:2). Though it is true that all sickness is due to sinfulness, not all sickness is the direct result of some particular sin. We are all sinners, and if we all suffered according to our sins, we would all be sick all of the time. In any event, our sin will affect our physical bodies unto

death. This is why we need the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and the life of Christ within us to live forever with Him in glory (Rom. 8:10).

These men going to such efforts to get the sick man to Jesus proved their faith in Jesus to heal their friend. *“AND JESUS SEEING THEIR FAITH SAID UNTO THE SICK OF THE PALSY; SON, BE OF GOOD CHEER.”* We see in the Gospel narratives that faith was (and is) involved even in the physical miracles that Christ performed. Even this faith is God-given. Is this always saving faith which is also the gift of God to His elect, that faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit to cause us to believe in Christ for all salvation and that leads to repentance and perseverance (Eph. 2:8-9)? Can a person have the faith of miracles and not have this saving faith? Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-2. This love of which Paul wrote is that divine love that only God’s true children have as shed abroad in their hearts as the Spirit reveals the love of God to them in Christ (Rom. 5:5-9). So it seems that a person can have the faith of miracles and not have saving faith in Christ. The faith that these men had is not explained here, but we see that Christ took notice of it and healed the man.

We also see that Christ connected healing this man to the forgiveness of his sins - *“THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE.”* We know that this was not always the case with those whom Christ healed physically (Luke 17:11-19). This indicates to me that their faith was true saving faith in Christ, not only as a miracle worker, but also as the Messiah Who is God incarnate, the Savior of sinners, and Who has the power to forgive sins. Now, faith is not the source, cause, or ground of forgiveness. The sovereign grace of God is the source, the love of God is the cause, and the blood of Christ is the ground of forgiveness. Faith evidences that one has already been forgiven by the blood of Christ (Acts 13:38-39; Eph. 1:5-7; Col. 1:13-14; 1 John 1:7). Some Greek scholars translate this as, “Your sins have been, and therefore are at this very moment, and remain, forgiven.” How can God forgive sins? It is based upon Christ having satisfied justice by suffering death, the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23). The pardon of sin is forever (Isa. 43:25).

(Matt. 9:3-4) - *“AND, BEHOLD, CERTAIN OF THE SCRIBES SAID WITHIN THEMSELVES, THIS MAN BLASPHEMETH”* - These self-righteous religionists knew that on God could forgive sins. They spoke privately to themselves that Jesus was a blasphemer because He claimed to be God. But *“JESUS KNOWING THEIR THOUGHTS SAID, WHEREFORE THINK YE EVIL IN YOUR HEARTS?”* The Lord knows our thoughts (Heb. 4:12-13). We cannot hide our hearts from Him.

(Matt. 9:5) - This question confused them because both are impossible for men but can only be accomplished by God.

(Matt. 9:6-7) - Jesus could heal the man with or without a word, but to forgive him required that the Lord Jesus suffer and die for his sins. Jesus proved that He had *“POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS”* by healing the man of palsy. The forgiveness of sins cannot be seen, but physical healing can be seen. So, to prove His deity and power, He told the man, *“ARISE, TAKE UP THY BED, AND GO UNTO THINE HOUSE.”* Fully healed and fully forgiven, all by the grace and power of God in Christ, he arose and went home.

(Matt. 9:8) - The crowd was amazed, and they ascribed the miracle unto God, but it seems they did not recognize Jesus Himself to be God manifest in the flesh, a truth that can only be known by divine revelation (Matt. 16:17). They wondered that God would give *“SUCH POWER UNTO MEN,”* as they still viewed Jesus as a mere man. Luke wrote of them, *“They were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things (things contrary to human reason) to day”* (Luke 5:26).