

Kingdom: A Journey Through Matthew

The Kings Authority—Part 1

Dr. David Platt

February 5, 2012



The Kings Authority—Part 1 Matthew 8

If you have His Word, and I hope you do, I invite you to open with me to Matthew 4. I know your notes say Matthew 8, and we will get there momentarily, but we're going to start in Matthew 4. Before we get into the Word, I want to let you know that I'm making a bit of an adjustment in our schedule walking through the Word this year. Before Christmas when we were starting Matthew, I shared that the plan was to walk through the life of Christ from His birth to His death and resurrection, from Christmas to Easter, basically walking through this book during that time period. That was the plan, but the problem is I'm enjoying Matthew a little too much and so I want to take a little bit longer in it. So instead of stopping at Easter, the plan now is to go through Matthew all the way through the end of June.

So obviously we'll pause on Easter; jump to the end of Matthew; celebrate the resurrection of Christ. But then we'll continue on through the end of the book all the way to June. What that means is that after June we'll probably take a little breather during July and look at some miscellaneous texts, and then starting in August we're going to pick up as I previously shared, we'll pick up in the Book of Revelation. And we'll walk through the Book of Revelation through the last half of this year. So first half of the year, first book of the New Testament. Last half of the year, last book in the New Testament.

So I look forward to seeing how God forms us as His people, by His Spirit, through His Word as we look at these eternally significant book ends in the New Testament. So what that means is this rest of our journey through Matthew will average out to about a chapter a week in order to get through June. And so you look today, we'll be in Matthew 8, which is part 1, because Matthew 8 and 9 really come together as a unit in the Book of Matthew.

Let me show this to you. We've talked before about how Matthew has arranged the material in this Gospel, not necessarily chronologically, but definitely intentionally and thematically. And that's why I've got you in Matthew 4 to start off. Look at Matthew 4:23. This is what Matthew told us to give us a little preview of what was to come right after this in Matthew 4. Look at verse 23. Matthew writes, "*And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.*" So that's a summary of Jesus' ministry. We talked about this: ministry in both word and deed. Word—teaching and preaching. Deed—healing.

So right after that, what we looked at last week, Matthew 5-7, was Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry in the Word—Sermon on the Mount. And then, right after that, you flip over to chapter 8 and what you'll see is story after story after story, describing ministry in deed—specifically His healing. So we've seen teaching and preaching in Matthew 5-7. Now we're going to see healing on display in Matthew 8 and 9. So Matthew has shown us the words of Jesus; now he's going to show us the works of Jesus.

The Basic Outline of Mathew 8-9...

This is the basic outline of these two chapters. I've put it in your notes just to kind of see how Matthew is arranging all of this. This is not chronological arrangement. This is not Matthew saying, "This event happened right after that. This event right after that. This event..." This is not a chronological picture here as much as it is a thematic picture here where Matthew is just going to give us highlights—healing stories, miracles, back to back to back to back to back highlights, much greater than any highlights of some football game tonight. These highlights are good. And so what you'll see...Just the whole bulk of these two chapters starts with three miracle stories...

Three Miracle Stories

in Matthew 8:1-17, cleansing a leper, healing of a Centurion servant, and the healing of Peter's Mother-in-law. And then Matthew's going to pause right in the middle of this chapter to show us two descriptions of discipleship

Two Description of Discipleship

in Matthew 8:18-22. And then he's going to presume with three more miracle stories in Matthew 8:23 down to 9:8. Jesus is going to calm the storm. He's going to heal two demon-possessed men. And then heal a paralytic. That will then set the stage for two more descriptions of discipleship in Matthew 9:9-17 when Jesus actually calls Matthew to follow Him. And then we get a note about fasting. And then we'll close out this section with three more miracle stories

Three miracle stories

in Matthew 9:18-34, three stories that actually contained four different miracles. So you have a girl who is dead and brought back to life, you have a woman who is healed, two blind men who are healed, and then a man who is mute who is enabled to speak. And so you've got nine miracle stories encompassing 10 miracles total that are summarized in these two chapters. And all of it is intended to show us a picture of the authority of Jesus.

In fact, you look at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, what did Matthew tell us right after Jesus finished His teaching in Matthew 7:28? He said, "*And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had [what? He had] authority...*" So we've seen authority in teaching. Now we're going to see His authority on display in healing—His authority in action. And the whole point, the bottom line of Matthew 8 and 9,

The Bottom Line of Mathew 8-9...

Matthew is going to make clear to us (you've got this in your notes; this is where this whole section of two chapters is going). Jesus possesses absolute authority in the world. It's what Matthew's going to show us. And as a result... Jesus warrants absolute allegiance from the world.

Jesus possesses absolute authority in the world and warrants absolute allegiance from the world.

That's the portrait that I want to show you of Jesus today in Matthew 8 and then next week, Lord willing, in Matthew 9. So here's the deal. You are, we together are, a people who are

familiar with sickness, and pain, and suffering in this world—your world, the world around us is filled with sickness, and struggle, and disease and suffering. I read this last week on the national cancer institute website, that one out of every two people born in the United States today will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their life. Half. And some of you are there. Many of you are there. Some of you have been there. Some of you will be there. And beyond cancer, there are people, there are families all across this church who are struggling with various sicknesses, walking through a variety of different kinds of struggles. On top of that, we live in a community that we've been reminded over the last year, is prone to never know when natural disaster comes our way with tornadoes that have ravished various communities, right near us. And so what I want us to see this morning is that whether it's cancer, or tornadoes, disease, or death, Jesus Christ has authority over it all. I want us to see how His authority over these things then leads us to see His authority over our lives. And in this, I want us to see how Jesus' authority over all of these things is really, really, really good news.

So that's where we're going here in Matthew 8 and 9. I struggled with how to split these chapters up because of the way it's structured. But I decided let's just go right down the middle which will cut us off halfway in between that second section of three miracle stories, but hopefully we'll be able to pick right up there next week and see the whole picture.

The Portrait of Jesus in Matthew 8...

So here's the portrait of Jesus in Matthew 8. What I want to do is instead of reading through the whole chapter, I want us to go verse by verse, story by story, and pause along the way and think about what Matthew is telling us—showing us—about Jesus. So let's start with the first story of Matthew 8:1.

"When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.'"

Jesus has Authority Over Disease

Okay. Let's stop there. First thing we learned about Jesus: He has authority over disease. Jesus has authority over disease, and we're going to see that in three different ways in these first three miracle stories, starting with this first story where Jesus cleanses, He cleanses the physically unclean. Now I want to emphasize that. In your notes, He cleanses the physically unclean, because this is a story that we just read that is not primarily about healing as much as it's about cleansing. Even the way the story is framed, you don't even see the word, "heal" mentioned. Instead you see the word "clean" and "cleanse."

And that's important because leprosy, especially in 1st Century Judaism, was not just looked at as a physical condition. Now it was certainly physical. Leprosy is a disease that attacks the nerve system to the point where a victim can no longer feel pain. A victim experiences infection easily which leads to degeneration of tissues in organs and eventually limbs, to the point where limbs become deformed and then fall off. So leprosy is certainly physical—it's brutally physical. But it's even more than that when you look at Leviticus 13 and 14 and you see laws concerning leprosy. You realize that leprosy was not just a physical illness; this was a spiritual contagion. Those with leprosy were considered unclean, cursed by God

(Numbers 12:10). People were required to stay a certain distance away from lepers because if you get near them, if you touched them, you would become unclean too. So lepers were told, "Whenever you get near someone or somebody gets near to you, you need to shout out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' So they'll be aware and move away." To touch a leper would be to defile yourself. Any garments that had been infected by leprosy had to be burned in the fire (Leviticus 13:52). So a leper was viewed as unclean. So when we read this story, we're seeing an account of how Jesus is cleansing the physically, ceremonially unclean.

Now listen to how it happens. This leper approaches Jesus which immediately creates a sense of tension when you realize you're not supposed to get near a leper. So this leper comes up to Him and says, "*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*" What a great phrase. "*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*" So see it. What the leper does know, the leper knows that Jesus is able to heal. The leper does not question Jesus' ability or power here, right? He knows that the leper is able to heal. The question is, what the leper doesn't know, is Jesus willing to heal? What he doesn't know is whether or not Jesus will choose to heal him.

So I think it's important to pause here for just a minute because I want to point out a distinction between Jesus' sovereign power and Jesus' sovereign will. And I want to remind you how both of them are extremely important, especially when it comes to even praying for healing in our own lives. Jesus' sovereign power and Jesus' sovereign will. So if you have cancer, if you have a tumor, if you have some sort of sickness or disease, do not ever for a second doubt Jesus' sovereign power; His ability to heal. Is Jesus able to heal you? Absolutely He is able. There's no question at all about that. He has authority over disease. The question is, and most of the time what we don't know is, is Jesus willing to heal? Is it His will for you to be healed? And that is a different question all together. Here in Matthew 8 the answer is yes. Jesus is willing to heal. But then you get over to 2 Corinthians 12 and you see Paul's struggle with a thorn in his flesh, and the Lord there is not willing to heal. The Lord does not heal, and He doesn't heal for good reasons. For a good purpose He says, "No, Paul, I'm not going to take this away from you so that you will learn to trust in My grace and My satisfaction and My strength." It was good reasoning.

So this is important. I've been studying for Secret Church on suffering. Which, by the way, I would certainly encourage you in your Small Group or something along those lines to maybe be a part of that on that Good Friday. It's going to be a good Good Friday on so many levels. But I came across a quote from James Montgomery Boice. He's the famous pastor of 5th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. And he was sharing with his congregation after he had been diagnosed with liver cancer. He was sharing with them how they should pray for him. I want you to listen to what he said. Boice said, "Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you are free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God Who is able to do miracles (and He certainly can) is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they're rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing. Above all then," Boice said, "I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying Himself in history and you say, 'Where in all history has God most glorified Himself?' He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ. And it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though He could have. Jesus said, 'Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for My defense?' But He didn't do that. And yet, that's where God is most glorified. God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It's not as if God somehow forgot what was going on and something bad slipped by. God is not only the One Who is in charge; God is also good, and everything He does is good."

Do you see that? There's a confidence there in the sovereign power of God and a trust there in the sovereign will of God. And we need both. We need both. Boice died eight weeks after sharing that with His congregation. But he died trusting in the sovereign power and sovereign will of God, knowing that Jesus was able to heal, yet submitting to Jesus' will, knowing that it was good, pleasing, and perfect whatever He would do. So that's important. Just a side note here; as you pray, trust in both His sovereign power and His sovereign will.

So back to the story. The leper says, "Lord," the One with sovereign authority, "if You will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out...Just picture it. Stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I will. Be clean." Oh, don't miss the beauty of that picture! We just talked about it! To touch a leper is to take a leper's uncleanness upon yourself. We know from the next story that Jesus didn't have to touch this man to heal him. Jesus could have said a word and the leprosy would be gone. But Jesus touched him, and in the process Jesus identified with the uncleanness of the leper in order to make the leper clean. And in this we have a wonderful foretaste of what Jesus will do ultimately on the cross with the uncleanness of every one of our lives.

You and I, all of us, we stand before God, dirty, stained with the shame of sin. You have things in your life. I have things in my life. You have things in your past or maybe present that make you feel untouchable and dirty, unclean. Sins that you struggled with—sins that maybe even others have committed against you—and you stand before Jesus unclean. Ultimately at the cross He identifies with your uncleanness. He takes all, all, all the filth and shame and stain of your sin upon Himself in order to make you clean. Praise God! And we are only three verses in to Matthew 8.

So right after this, Jesus says, "*See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest*" to show that you are clean, which is what Leviticus 13 and 14 would have instructed a leper to do. Sometimes we wonder because we see it here and we see it in other places in the gospels where Jesus is saying, "Don't tell anybody what happened." And there's a variety of reasons behind that. But ultimately don't forget that Jesus' purpose in coming on the scene here is not to be known as a wonder worker. Jesus is not coming to impress the crowds. He's coming to die for sinners. And there's very important purposes that are being accomplished in each one of these miracles. But ultimately it's pointing to the reality that He is not coming as some would expect a Messiah to come to overthrow Roman rule with all these miracles; He's coming to show that the Kingdom of Heaven is here and He is making a way for men to know the King through His death on the cross. That's where it's all headed.

So we find ourselves then moving on to the second story, verse 5.

"When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.' And he said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' But the centurion replied, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.' When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, 'Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth.' And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment."

So first story, Jesus cleanses the physically unclean. Now, Jesus heals the ethnically outcast. The centurion here and his servant would have been Gentiles, likely brought in for military service from somewhere outside Galilee, probably Lebanon, Syria. And as a Roman centurion, this man would have been viewed not only by the Jewish people as ethnically outcast, outside of the chosen people of God, but actually he's deliberately opposed to the people of God because he represented a Roman rule over them. That makes Jesus' reply in verse 7 altogether surprising, because a devout Jew would not even go into the home of an unbelieving Gentile. But as soon as Jesus says, "I will come." The gentile centurion responds. *"Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."*

And then the justification here. "I am a man of authority. I know what it's like to say to a soldier, 'You go,' and he goes. To a servant, 'Come,' and he comes. And Jesus replies, "I've not found this kind of faith in all of Israel." Which begs the question, "What kind of faith is this?" And the picture is wonderful. It's the picture of faith—follow this—faith that is humble trust in the authority of Jesus. Humble trust in the authority of Jesus. Humble here. This gentile centurion is calling Jesus, a Jewish teacher, Lord. And he says, "I'm not even worthy to have You in my home. Just say the word." And then explanation is astounding. "All You have to do is say it. I know what it's like to have soldiers, servants, who respond to my bidding." And the implication is this is a man who is saying to Jesus, "You have that kind of authority over paralysis. It's your servant. You say go and they will go. You have authority over disease like that."

What a picture of faith that his disciples, Jesus' disciples, had not even realized yet—that no one in Israel had realized. That's where Jesus begins to talk about sons of the Kingdom, a picture of what the people of Israel who thought by right, biologically, they were part of the people of God. And Jesus is making very clear that is not what brings you a seat at the table in the Kingdom of Heaven. What brings you a seat at the table in the Kingdom of Heaven is faith, is humble trust in the authority of Jesus. Follow this. Jesus is saying that that kind of faith is the essential determinate of a person's eternal destiny. And this is where this passage comes right into your lap this morning.

The determinate of your life for all of eternity is based on whether or not you have put humble trust in the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in Jesus and His authority to save you from your sins and to reign as the Lord over your life? This is what will separate all people in eternity. The essential determinate of every person's eternity is humble trust in the sovereign authority of Jesus. And all who trust in Him like that, regardless of ethnicity or background, will be welcomed by the King at His table.

Jesus cleanses the physically unclean. He heals the ethnically outcast. And, third, He restores the culturally marginalized. This next verse is where a lot of commentators point out a theme in these first three miracle stories. For all of them seem to focus on people that are on the outskirts of Jewish society or culture. First it's the leper. Second, it's the gentile. And now third, it's a woman, sometimes viewed as a second-class citizen in that picture—Peter's Mother-in-law. Verse 14 says, *"And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him."*

And thus we have third miracle story. Again, Jesus healing with a simple touch, but something that would not have been common for a man to do in relating to a woman in 1st

Century Judaism. And then Matthew concludes these three stories with these two verses. Verse 16. *"That evening,"* it's kind of a general picture, *"That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick."* And then he says in verse 17, *"This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.'"*

Now that's interesting. Matthew quotes here from Isaiah to explain what's going on. And he quotes specifically from what chapter in Isaiah? You look at your note at the bottom of your page. Isaiah chapter what? 53. You remember that chapter? Prophecy of the suffering servant, a prophecy about how Jesus would come, He would take our illnesses, bear our diseases; He would be *"pierced for our transgressions," "crushed for our iniquities."* *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* Isaiah 53 is that chapter, that prophecy that looks forward to the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross for sinners. And it's there where Matthew quotes from to give commentary on what's going on here.

Now it's at this point where a lot of people get confused. Then they say, "Well, does this mean then, when Jesus died on the cross, He died so that we wouldn't have to be sick in this world anymore?" This is big, because I don't want us to be confused concerning this reality that Jesus has authority over disease. Some take this truth and have taken these verses to conclude that as a Christian, God's will in this world is for you to be healthy because Jesus has taken away your sicknesses. This is at the core of health and wealth prosperity teaching in churches across Birmingham, the United States, and around the world. As a Christian, they say, "You are free from disease."

This is a quote from Joel Osteen. He writes, "Maybe Alzheimer's disease runs in your family genes, but don't succumb to it. Instead, you say every day, 'My mind is alert. I have clarity of thought. I have a good memory. Every cell in my body is increasing and getting healthier.' If you will rise up in your authority, you can be the one to put a stop to the negative things in your family line. Start boldly declaring, 'God is restoring health unto me. I am getting better every day in every way.'" He believes that if you do that, every day will become a Friday for you, but that is not true.

Clearly Matthew is showing us, follow here, that Jesus has the power, He has the authority to overcome all suffering—no question about that. That's the point of these three stories. But Matthew is grounding that authority, that power in the reality that Jesus, according to Isaiah 53, has paid the price to overcome all our sin. And that is the point of the cross. So follow with me here. This is really important. All suffering in the world ultimately goes back to sin in the world, right? Before sin even came into the picture, there was no suffering (Genesis 1-2). When sin enters the world in Genesis 3, suffering enters the world. And as a result, we live in a world marked by evil and suffering, sickness and pain. Now when Jesus came to die on the cross, He came to address the root problem. The root problem is not suffering. The root problem is what? Sin. And He paid the price with His life to overcome our sin so that you and I could be free from the penalty of sin. That is the point of the cross.

So does that mean then that God's will for us in this world is no longer to experience pain and sickness and suffering? Absolutely not! All of these miracles that we're reading about here are intended to give us a picture of what is to come in the fullness of God's Kingdom, when Christ fully and finally asserts His authority, and His rule, and His reign on the earth. But that time is not yet. In the meantime, we still live in a world full of suffering and pain. And we'll see on Good Friday that our suffering actually increases in this world as a result of trusting in Christ for salvation. Jesus, just two chapters after this, is going to tell His disciples that they will be flawed, betrayed, hated, and persecuted in this world.

Paul, who is constantly dealing with sickness and suffering in Scripture, says in Philippians 1, *"For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."* It's been granted. He uses the word for gift. It's a gift for you to believe in Christ and to suffer. Come to Christ and get a gift: suffering. Colossians 1 says, *"We are filling up what is lacking in [regard to] Christ's afflictions, Christ's sufferings."* 2 Corinthians 4. *"We are crushed, struck down, perplexed, carrying in our bodies the death of Jesus."* Philippians 3. *"We have the fellowship of sharing in sufferings with Christ."*

Romans 8 makes clear that we live in a world that is decaying and we suffer. We could go on and on with other verses. But suffice to say, the Bible nowhere says that because you have been saved from your sins, you will not get cancer, or a tumor, or Alzheimer's or whatever. Instead, the Bible says very clearly that at the cross, Jesus has overcome the root of all suffering—sin itself. He has paid the price to conquer sin so that you don't need to be afraid of cancer, or tumors, or Alzheimer's, or whatever because you know that even if it comes, even when it comes in this decaying world, you know that your Savior has conquered sin at its root. And one day, one day in the future—not guaranteed now—but one day in the future Jesus will assert His full and final authority over all the effects of sin, including suffering. And on that day, death, and mourning, and crying, and pain, and sickness will be no more.

But that day is not yet. We wait for that day. We long for that day. And as we anticipate that day, we don't run from suffering; we rejoice in suffering. Romans 5. *"We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."* Romans 8. We consider our present *"sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the [future] glory that is to be revealed to us."* So we wait with expectation for them. 2 Corinthians 4:17-19, Paul says our troubles and afflictions are light and momentary and they are preparing us for surpassing glory that will far outweigh any suffering we experience in this world.

So when you hear, "Jesus has authority over disease," do not take that, brothers and sisters, to mean that as a Christian you will be free from disease. Take that to mean that because Jesus has authority over disease, you have hope and joy and strength that surpasses the worst trials and the worst diseases that this world may ever bring you. Jesus has authority over disease.

Jesus Has Authority Over Disciples

Now with that established, Matthew then pauses and inserts a story about discipleship to potential disciples. Verse 18.

"Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another of the disciples said to him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' And Jesus said to him, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.'"

Now we've studied a similar passage like this in Luke 9:57-62. The picture here is clear. Jesus' authority is not just over disease; He has authority over disciples. This first man comes to Him in seeming over-eagerness saying, "I'll follow You wherever You go." But Jesus knows that this man has not even begun to count the cost of what it means to follow

Him. And He says to Him, "Follow Me, and you're not even guaranteed a roof over your head. If you follow Me," Jesus says, "I am all you've got."

Jesus is worthy of unconditional trust. You follow Him, you may lose everything in this world. Yet another problem with health and wealth prosperity teaching that makes Jesus to be a means to an end. "Come to Jesus and get," fill in the blank. "Come to Jesus and get health. Come to Jesus and get wealth. Come to Jesus and get prosperity. Come to Jesus and get whatever stuff." It's blasphemy. You don't come to Jesus to get stuff. You come to Jesus to get Jesus. He's the One we've won! He's the One we need! And take everything in this world away from us and we will be satisfied in Him. He's that good and that worth it. So run from health and wealth prosperity teaching. It minimizes the glory of Jesus as the satisfaction of our souls. He's worthy of unconditional trust. And He's worthy of undivided affection.

The second potential disciple says to Jesus, "Let me go back and bury my father." There's a lot of discussion about what's going on here, whether this man's father had just died or was about to die. Some believe that he wanted to go back basically to get an inheritance from his father before he followed Jesus. Regardless, Jesus says, "Leave him behind and follow Me." More important than honoring your father or receiving an inheritance from your father, you follow Jesus' undivided affection.

Now, another side note here, but a very important side note. There's a distinction I need to make as we're talking about suffering today. When you look in the Bible, sometimes you see suffering due to general sin in the world—Job-like suffering; suffering that is not directly tied to a particular sin in someone's life. Suffering that is simply a result of sin in the world. That's the kind of suffering we're talking about this morning, that we rejoice in, that we embrace in the decaying world, knowing that glory is coming.

But there's another type of suffering in the Bible and that's suffering due to specific sin in someone's life. The reality is, when you and I sin, we will inevitably suffer. And the Bible is clear that as a result of sin in each of our lives, you may suffer physically. There's physical suffering in Scripture attached to specific sins in people's lives. Emotionally, relationally, in different ways, but inevitably sin leads to suffering. And the kind of...The answer in that kind of situation is not to rejoice in your suffering. The answer in that situation is to run from your sin. So this morning, even as I seek to encourage people who are walking through things that are simply the fruit of living in a world full of sin and suffering, the last thing I want to do is for those of you who are suffering due to a specific sin in your life to think, "Okay, well I'm just supposed to embrace that suffering." The Word for you this morning is plain and clear. Run from your sin. Undivided allegiance, unconditional trust in God. That is God's will for your life. There's a lot that could be said there but I just want to make that distinction. I want us to see how Jesus' sovereign authority in the world leads to total allegiance from our lives.

Jesus' authority is not to be toyed or trifled with. J.C. Rowell once said, "Nothing has done more harm to Christianity than the practice of filling the ranks of Christ's army with every volunteer who is willing to make a little profession." Jesus is not begging for followers here in Matthew 8; He is turning followers away, because He warrants unconditional trust and undivided allegiance from those who follow Him. So Christian, remember you are following the One Who speaks and leprosy obeys. He speaks and paralysis obeys. He speaks and fever obeys. So when He speaks, you and I obey. He has authority over disciples.

Jesus Has Authority Over Disaster

Which leads to the next story. Verse 23. Jesus has authority over disaster.

"And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, 'Save us, Lord; we are perishing.' And he said to them, 'Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?' Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?'"

Now it's at this point that many sermons on this text vault into extravagant promises about how Jesus will calm all the storms in your life. What storms are you facing in your life, in your marriage, your home, your work, with your health? Whatever it may be, Jesus will calm all of those storms. The only problem is that's not the point of the story. The point is much deeper than that and you realize the point when you look at the question the disciples asked at the end. Verse 27. *"What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"* These are good, Jewish men in the boat with Him, and they know that only God, Yahweh, the LORD in the Old Testament, only God is able to direct the wind and the waves.

Psalm 89:8. *"O LORD God of hosts...You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them."* Psalm 107:29. *"He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed."* These disciples marvel because they realize that the Man in the boat with them is no ordinary man. They are realizing that God Himself, the Lord, is in the boat with them. And that's the point of the story. The point of the story is Jesus is God. The authority that belongs to God is the authority that belongs Jesus. And that has everything to do with the promise in this story.

The promise in this story is not that all the storms in your life will end soon. I cannot guarantee that and the Bible does not guarantee this. I cannot promise you today that your cancer will go away or that the struggle in your marriage will end this week. I cannot promise you that this or that facet of your life that is extremely difficult right now will be better at this time next year. The reality is the storm you find yourself in may last for a short amount of time or it may last for a very prolonged amount of time. I do not know if the storm in your life will end soon. But I do know this, and it's the promise in this story. Not that the storms in your life will end soon, but that amidst the storms in your life, you will never be alone. God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ will be with you every step in the middle of the storm. Faith is not confidence that difficult things won't come your way. Faith is not confidence that trials won't occur. Faith is confidence that no matter what wind and waves come your way in this world, the God of the universe will be right there in the middle of the boat with you and His power and His presence will always see you through. You are not alone. And ultimately you are safe in the presence of the One Who has ultimate authority over all disaster.

Jesus Has Authority Over Demons

Leading to the last story in Matthew 8. Jesus has authority over demons. Verse 28.

"And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, 'What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?' Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, 'If you cast us out, send us away into the herd

of pigs.' And he said to them, 'Go.' So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region."

What a great story. There's so much in here. We don't have time to dive into it all, but see a portrait of demons who violently possess two men, and yet at the same exact time are deathly afraid of the Son of God. Knowing that Jesus has absolute authority over them, they plead for Him to cast them into a herd of pigs, and He does. I love the fact that demons hate and loathe everything about Jesus, yet they are powerless to do one little thing apart from His sovereign permission. Satan can do nothing in this world. His minions can do nothing in your life apart from the sovereign permission of God. Satan is a lion (1 Peter 5) but he is a lion on a leash. And Jesus holds the leash. Demons do not decidedly do not have all authority. Jesus does. Do you see how encouraging this is? Along with all these stories...Do you see how these stories just encourage you and me in this room not to fear? Not to ever fear what may happen to us in this world, not to fear what may come at us in this world when we see Jesus' authority.

So many of us...We live in a world of evil, and suffering, and pain. And as a result, so many of us, even as Christians, live in fear and anxiety, and we worry, we wonder, we worry, "What's going to happen in this situation or that situation?" Brother or sister, when you begin to fear, I urge you to remember the authority of Jesus. I was thinking, just reflecting pastorally on coming to the end of Matthew 8, and thinking, praying about fears and struggles that I know, I'm confident are represented all around this room, in different areas of different people's lives.

As we come to the end here, in this last story, I couldn't help but see a contrast and I put it in your notes. Think about this with me. These demons have fear because of their belief. They know who Jesus is and they are scared out of their minds. Demons believe in, know the authority of Jesus, and that's why they're afraid here in Matthew 8. But we are just the opposite. We oftentimes have fear because of our unbelief. We struggle with fear oftentimes because we lack the faith of demons. Does that make sense? Are you following with me here? These demons knew. If we realized what they realize about Jesus, we would have no reason to fear. He's the Son of God with authority over disease, demons, disaster. And nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing can touch us apart from His sovereign power in His sovereign will. We are the most secure people in the world, and our security, Birmingham residents, is not based on how big our house is or how good our job is or how stable our economy is, or who in the world our president is, or anything else. We are secure simply because we're in the hands of the One Who has all authority in all the world and He cares for us. And He is committed to providing everything you and I need in a world full of evil and suffering, sickness and pain. We have no reason to fear. So why do you fear, you of little faith?

A Pause After Reading Matthew 8...

So we come to the end of Matthew 8, half-way through this little section of Matthew, and I want us to just pause. And I want to encourage every person in this room who is in Christ. I want to encourage us, let's trust wholeheartedly in Jesus' authority. Faith, humble trust in the authority of Jesus. No matter what is going on in your life today, be reminded, you can

trust Him. And as we trust, let's rest peacefully in Jesus' authority. I don't want to minimize the difficulty of what I know some of you are walking through. But I want to encourage you with a picture at the end of each one of these stories. You've got a leper who is standing there cleansed. You've got a once paralyzed man rising up. A woman's fever gone. You've got a storm totally stilled—totally quiet. Two men formerly possessed by demons sitting there peacefully.

This is God's desire for us—that we rest in His authority. As we rest, we submit. Let's submit completely to Jesus' authority. Let's follow Him with unconditional trust and undivided affection. He is our Lord. He is sovereign. He's sovereign over us; in control of us. And we have let go in a very real sense of everything in order to follow Him. And so let suffering drive us to find deeper treasure and joy and satisfaction in Him. Submitting to Him. And as we submit completely to His authority, let's rejoice gladly in His authority.

Now don't put your notes up. I want you to see this one thing and then we'll close out. Go to Matthew 8:29. Did you notice when these demons are addressing Jesus, they cried out, *"What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"* Before the time. Oh, don't miss it. These demons know that there is coming a time, there is coming a day when they will be fully and finally judged by the Lord and cast out completely into utter darkness. And it is a reminder—it's infused throughout this chapter—that there is coming a day when leprosy will be no more, and paralysis will be no more, and fever will be no more, and natural disasters will be no more, and demons will no longer tempt or torment God's people. And this is our hope.

There is coming a day when the authority of Jesus will be fully and finally asserted. His Kingdom will come and yes, His will be done on a new earth as it is in Heaven. And all of that is possible...All of that is not just possible; it's guaranteed based on what Jesus did for us at the cross. He conquered sin at the root. He dealt with the issue. He rose from the grave so that we, no matter what is going on in our lives today, no matter what diagnosis comes our way this week, we have hope, and joy, and life, and peace, and no reason to fear.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net