

## Filled With Awe 8-1-04

Matthew 9:1-8 (NIV)

*1 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. 2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" 4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.*

As we work our way through Matthew, let us remember the ground we have covered. Matthew seems to be very systematic in his thinking. Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, and then He backed it up with a series of miraculous events that showed Him to be the God of the Old Testament. That validated His authority to define the Law correctly. His touch healed the leper. This showed He is most holy. The Law declared that to touch a leper defiled you. But it also declared that that which is most holy will sanctify what is unclean. (Exodus 29:37) The miracle of the cleansing of the leper showed Jesus to be most holy. The miracle of the healing of the Centurion's servant showed that He is in authority over spirits. He could command the spirit of illness to leave a person even though they were not in His presence. That showed His omnipresence. (2Chronicles 16:9a) He healed all that came to Him. That showed him to be Jehovah Rapha of Exodus, the God that heals. (Exodus 15:26) In stilling the wind and waves He showed He was the Master over matter and Jehovah Tsaba of Psalm 89:8-9. When He drove out the demons He showed that He was the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) over all spirits according to Numbers 27:16. He is Most Holy, omnipresent, the God that heals, the One who can order His creation, and the Lord over all spirits. Jesus is Divine!

In this chapter, because of such a powerful demonstration that He is God, religious leaders came from all over Israel to see what He is about. Some people claim that Jesus never declared He was God. They don't understand the Old Testament and the Jewish culture or just aren't being intellectually honest. Many are like the Jews in chapter 9, in which we begin to see opposition to His person and ministry. When you see that Jesus is who He presented Himself to be, you either surrender yourself to His love or you rebel at the thought of having any other ruler than self.

This is what our nation is struggling with in this day. Can't we be our own lord? Can't we arbitrarily choose right and wrong according to our convenience? Why does Martha Stewart have to do time? Why would the crime of stealing secret government documents be punished? Mr. Berger is a nice man. Can't we make an exception for nice people? This is why there is such an effort to rid the nation of the Ten Commandments; they are absolutes that limit my freedom to be my own master. I'm saddened to say that as we continue down this path, we are seeing the hand of God's

**Commented [notes1]:** 37 For seven days make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy.  
Ex 29:37 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.  
2 Chron 16:9a (KJV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 26 He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."  
Ex 15:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 8 O LORD God Almighty, who is like you?  
You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.  
9 You rule over the surging sea;  
when its waves mount up, you still them.  
Psalms 89:8-9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 16 "May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community  
Num 27:16 (NIV)

blessing and protection lift from this great nation. This is the spirit these religious leaders begin to show in chapter 9. Jesus' authority threatened to replace their authority, and they would not yield.

Capernaum had become known as His own town. Jesus was apparently staying in Peter's house. The large room that later became a church, had plastered walls, something very unusual in that city. People graffitied the walls with expressions of "Jesus is Lord" in their various languages. It was probably in that very room that the story we are reading took place. I challenge you again to remember, this is an actual historical account, not a fairy tale. We have archeological evidence and the martyrdom of the apostles that declare this to be true.

We'll get a fuller picture of what happened as we borrow some of the details from Mark and Luke's accounts. Luke 5:17 (NIV) *One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.* The religious leaders from all over the nation had come to find out what was going on. He healed many more this day, but something very unusual was said when the paralyzed man was healed. Mark tells us in Mark 2:2 (NIV) *"So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them."* The place was solidly packed with people wanting to hear and those who wanted to be healed.

Now we can return to the Matthew account, *2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."* The mat is the same Greek word used for the couch upon which they reclined to eat. Luke uses the diminutive form, meaning a small version of a couch. It must have had four legs and probably weighed more than we would first imagine. Four friends of the paralyzed man decided that they had to get him to Jesus, so they grabbed the couch he was lying on and carried him on it to Peter's home. Mark tells us in Mark 2:4 (NIV), *"Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralytic man was lying on."*

Every account of this story says that when Jesus saw their faith He spoke to the man. Who are they? Personally, I believe it is all five men, the four peering through the hole in the roof and the man on the mat. This might shake up your theology a bit, but it clearly says that Jesus forgave this man's sins when He saw their faith. Certainly the man on the mat had to be included in the ones that had faith, yet, his faith alone was not what Jesus was looking at.

We plead with God to heal or to bring forgiveness of sins to someone, and sometimes we wonder if it isn't all up to them. How can we have faith for them? Well, we can't really have faith instead of them, but we can have faith with them. These four friends knew where to take the paralyzed man. They cared enough to bring him to Jesus and then to not give up in spite of the difficulty. They weren't about to stop outside the house. They were determined to find a way to get this man in front of Jesus.

I hope that God has given you a similar burden for someone you know. Has God blessed you with faith for a loved one or acquaintance? Don't give up. Keep encouraging them, but most of all, get them to Jesus. If they can just look up into His face, your faith and theirs will bring the same results. Is something in the way? Maybe you'll have to tear through it. Look what Jesus will say just two chapters later in 11:12 (NIV), "*From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.*" That doesn't mean we beat people up to convert them, but it does mean we don't lay down and let Satan win the battle for the soul of the one God has laid on our heart. Tear the roof up! Find a way to get them in front of Jesus. Buy them a book that will speak to their heart. Ask to pray for them and do it right then and there. Sometimes a prayer can usher them into His presence like nothing else. These were forceful men that didn't let a little thing like a roof keep them from getting their friend to Jesus.

To understand the shockwave that ran through the room when Jesus said, "*Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven,*" we have to understand the beliefs of those religious leaders. "In Palestine it was a universal belief that all sickness was the result of sin, and that no sickness could ever be cured until sin was forgiven. Rabbi Ami said, 'There is no death without sin, and no pains without some transgression.' Rabbi Alexander said, 'The sick arises not from his sickness, until his sins are forgiven.' Rabbi Chiya ben Abba said, 'No sick person is cured from sickness, until all his sins are forgiven him.' This unbreakable connection between suffering and sin was part of the orthodox Jewish belief of the time of Jesus."—Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT)

No doubt, the paralyzed man believed that his condition was the result of sin, and it very well may have been. So, when Jesus said to take heart, He was saying that the man should be encouraged because the root of the illness, his sin, was gone! Psalm 32:1-2

If they didn't hear of the miracles that preceded this one, and understand that they all were a declaration of the divinity of Jesus, then this one was unmistakable. *3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"* Listen to how Mark tells it in, Mark 2:6-7 (NIV) "*Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"* Yes, indeed! Sin is offending the holiness of God. Sin is the fact that, in spite of God making Adam sinless and giving us everything, we would choose to disobey and rebel against His perfection. The offense is toward God first and foremost. (Psalm 51:4) Only the offended party has the right to forgive. If Jesus can forgive, then He is the One that was offended by the sin of the man. They were right in saying that God alone could forgive sin, because sin is an offense against the holiness of God. (2Samuel 12:13)

The next thing that happens in this story will make you very uncomfortable if you have not let Christ renew your mind. If you haven't been taught of the Holy Spirit to capture your thoughts, this might bother you. (2Corinthians 10:5) Jesus understood what the religious leaders were thinking. *4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?"* Jesus knows what you are thinking! He can read your thoughts like an open book. (Psalm 139:2) Notice how He says,

**Commented [notes6]:** 1 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 2 Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. Psalms 32:1-2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Psalms 51:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** 13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. 2 Sam 12:13 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Psalms 139:2 (NIV)

"entertaining evil thoughts in your hearts." Evil thoughts will pass through our minds, even the minds of born again redeemed believers, on a regular basis. Can I ask you what Jesus asked the Pharisees, "Why do you entertain them in your heart?" Well? Don't you know that what you dwell on affects your soul? If you have given your life to Jesus, what are you doing sitting down with evil and entertaining it. (2Corinthians 6:14) What a word, entertain! When you entertain a guest you make them feel at home. You meet their needs and make them feel welcome. Are you welcoming evil thoughts? (Matthew 5:19)

**Commented [notes11]:** 14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?  
2 Cor 6:14 (NIV)

For many of us that has been such a habitual action that when we came to Christ we found we were stuck in a pattern that takes a lot of effort and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to break. Do you entertain gossip? Slander? Lust, whether for things or feelings or people? If you make a place in your heart to entertain those evil thoughts, you will suffer the consequences. Jesus is asking, "Why would you do that?" It is probably because you have been tricked into thinking there is some value in them. You don't really believe Jesus when He says those things are destructive. (Mark 7:23)

**Commented [notes12]:** 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:  
Matt 15:19 (KJV)

For these Pharisees they were entertaining the desire for authority. (Matthew 27:18) They had clear testimonies that Jesus did what was attributed to God alone in their sacred writings. Yet, when made to face that fact, they would only look at it as blasphemy, insulting God by making yourself equal with God. When there is another god in our heart, we interpret the conviction of the Holy Spirit as the voice of Satan or self. When there is another god that we desire, we incline ourselves toward rejecting the voice of conviction and welcoming the voice of doubt. It is a treacherous state to be in, because it is so hard to escape. Without the patient pursuit of the Holy Spirit we would never escape it. The Pharisees feared losing their authority and position. If God were incarnated, and spoke and taught in ways contrary to those by which they controlled the people, they would either need to give up all they had lived for and start again with nothing, or reject Him to go their own way. (Matthew 6:24) Why did they entertain these evil thoughts in their heart? It is because they refused to surrender their pride and position to the true God. (1John 2:15-17)

**Commented [notes13]:** 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.  
Mark 7:23 (KJV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 18 For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.  
Matt 27:18 (NIV)

Once they had acknowledged the reality that only God could forgive sins, Jesus does something that is very gracious to them and to us. He put them in a position in which they had to face their own heart, and He did it using simple logic. 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? Since they believed sin was the cause of illness, and they were certain that only God could forgive sin, if Jesus could heal this man, then He could forgive sin. They couldn't come to any other conclusion.

**Commented [notes15]:** 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.  
Matt 6:24 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.  
16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.  
17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.  
1 John 2:15-17 (NIV)

6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." Please notice that He said, "so that you may know". He healed the man for the sake of the religious leaders. They needed to overcome their prejudiced ways of thinking that preserved their power. He was making them face the fact that they were wrong. This is a very dangerous thing to do, because it may have the opposite result. It may force them to take a stand against Him. I have seen this personally. God will often

be gracious enough to make us face the fact that we are wrong. Then what will we do about it? Either we will repent, or grow harder in our rebellion. Sometimes we forget that Jesus loved these hard-hearted Pharisees. He wasn't their enemy. He was their Savior, if they would receive Him. He was attempting to make them see the truth, and He will do the same with us in areas of our life where we are mistaken. (Philippians 3:15)

*7 And the man got up and went home.* Luke tells us the man went home praising God. I imagine his friends were too. Imagine if Cory came to visit and got up out of his wheelchair. We'd be praising God along with him. The man in the story picked up that bed and walked. When you've been bed ridden, you have to learn to walk again and build up the muscles. When Jesus does a miracle it is complete. The muscles and memory were restored as well. What a miracle! What a Savior! But remember what it is for, so that you will know Jesus can forgive sin. The history of the Jewish people was the search for forgiveness, of being restored from the fall of Adam. They had promises and prophecies, pictures and analogies, but right then and there Jesus was declaring, "I am the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. I am the One who has been offended, and so, I and I alone can forgive." (Psalm 103:2-4)

*8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.* It was not only authority to heal, but also authority to forgive. Many were healed that day, but this healing also included the healing of the relationship between this man and God. That was what filled them with awe. God gave the man, Christ Jesus, the ability to forgive. (Acts 10:43)

Do you realize that in your heart? Maybe you are faced with this story today just as they were 2000 years ago. You have to decide what you will do with this dilemma that Jesus places before you. His healing of the man showed that He could forgive offenses against God. You can try to find a way out in your mind, like the Pharisees did, but you can't really deny what He said and did. You can't deny it is unique in all of history. Just like those religious leaders, you must decide if you will humble yourself and come to Jesus for forgiveness, even if it means laying down everything you have lived for, or you can refuse to face it and harden your heart. You can entertain evil in your heart and allow it to destroy you. God has given you the privilege to choose. Which will it be, entertaining evil in your heart or filled with awe? (Joshua 24:15) You might ask, awe of what? Look at these true stories in God's word and be in awe. Sit down and look at this place that we live in. Look at the people sitting around you whose lives have been changed. Remember when you first received Jesus and were forgiven. Or may I suggest that you just take an hour this afternoon to get alone in a quiet place and just let Jesus speak to your heart. Take your Bible, still your mind and heart, and come into His presence with praise. You'll be in awe.

As we enter this time of communion, we are reminded of the awe-inspiring thing that Jesus did for us. We are in awe at the display of love that saved our souls.

**Commented [notes17]:** 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Phil 3:15 (KJV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Psalms 103:2-4 (KJV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Acts 10:43 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Josh 24:14-15 (NIV)