

## Matthew 8:14-34 – “Discipleship, Difficulties, and Demons”

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### 1. Deliverance – 8:14-17

**8:14-15 - *Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. <sup>15</sup> So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.***

Jesus once again reaches out with a healing touch. And here's a real act of mercy and demonstration of a changed life in Peter. Because he has Jesus heal his mother-in-law. That's when you know there's a genuine love of God at work.

Notice, with a simple touch Jesus healed her completely and immediately – she was able to get up and serve!

Jesus has done an amazing work in our lives by healing us from our greatest ailment – sin. He has shown us great compassion and grace in doing so. We've been made whole. But we've been made whole so we can faithfully serve God. Don't waste your life on self – there's no joy or blessing in that. Don't waste what God has done for you in healing, cleansing, and saving you. Use this restored life to serve our God and others!

**8:16-17 - *When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, <sup>17</sup> that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”***

Many were brought to Jesus that were in great need. Many were demon-possessed. And Jesus cast them out with just a word. Jesus has full authority over all. He is not a created being on equal footing with the devil or demons, He is their Creator! And He has full control. At just His word they need to obey.

We read that Jesus healed all who were sick, and that it was evening. I'm so glad that Jesus didn't say, *‘I'm done, I need a break! I've put in my hours for today!’* He continued to serve others. And this is what He said was nourishing to Him: **John 4:34**, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”*

Matthew now takes us back to what the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:4.

We see in **Isaiah 53:4–5**, *"Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."*

This points to the work Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Now many people have applied this to mean that we should never be sick; that Jesus took our infirmities. And He did. He took our sin – which was our greatest ailment. He bore the penalty of that on the cross so that it would not have its final outcome in our life.

Too many people however have taken this as a promise of permanent healing from sickness in this world. This thinking is at the core of the health and wealth prosperity gospel that sadly gets peddled by false teachers.

Matthew 8:17 is not a right to demand healing today. It's a promise that Jesus has taken away the cause of our suffering, which is sin, and He will one day resurrect these bodies where there will be no more sickness or suffering.

- Does He heal today? Absolutely. Is it something to expect or claim He must do. No. Remember last week's message: there's His sovereign power but it's balanced with His sovereign will.
- One day we'll experience the complete and final healing when we're given our resurrected and glorified bodies.

**8:18 - *And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.***

Remember the leper in Matthew 8:4 was told to tell no one but he couldn't keep it to himself (as Mark 1:45 says). So now the multitudes are pressing in and making it hard for Jesus to minister freely. So He decides to depart to the other side. Not to run away, but to continue to minister to others and meet their needs.

## 2. Discipleship – 8:19-22

**8:19-20 - *Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." <sup>20</sup> 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."***

Here we see a scribe who wanted to follow Jesus. Again, a scribe was an expert in the law and often taught it to disciples. Now He wants to be a disciple of Jesus.

But Jesus wants to give him a proper perspective. Perhaps the scribe was being motivated by the miracles and healings he's seen. Maybe he's thinking, *'This is the guy to link with, I'm never going to be in need or pain ever again!'* But Jesus doesn't want followers based on emotion or ulterior motives.

Jesus let's this man know that the life of discipleship is not one of comfort and luxury. You've got to deny all these things. This is what Jesus calls us to in **Luke 9:23**, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."*

But those willing to do this ultimately find life rather than lose it (Luke 9:24).

Do you have the **proper perspective** in coming to Jesus? Are you coming to Him for what you can get from Him? Or are you coming to Him ready to give Him your life knowing that without Him you have no life!

Jesus next touches on having a **proper priority**.

**9:21-22 - *Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."* <sup>22</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."**

Now at first reading this response may sound a little harsh or calloused coming from Jesus. But the man's request most likely wasn't about taking care of a deceased father. It was that this man wanted to hang out with his pops, care for him, and wait until his father passed away so he could receive his inheritance.

Jesus is showing that we must not have any divided loyalties or pursuits. Jesus is it and He's all we need!

Is He the priority in our lives? Have you counted the cost to follow Him. Jesus knows that if we're not all in, knowing that there's nothing that is more worthwhile than living for Jesus, then we're going to quickly be rattled and run at the slightest sign of difficulty.

Jesus is showing that we must be wholly devoted to Him above all. He is to be our priority.

Next we see that following Jesus isn't always smooth sailing. We won't always have perfect conditions. But we learn some valuable lessons along the way.

### 3. Difficulties – 8:23-27

**8:23-24 - *Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.***

I can just imagine Jesus having some fun with His disciples knowing what they're going to be confronted with. Perhaps it was perfect sailing conditions when they got in the boat, but as they set sail ***suddenly a great tempest arose***. It's as though this came out of nowhere. But Jesus knew all along. And He's not worried one bit! He's fast asleep in the midst of the storm.

- And this was no ordinary storm. The word ***tempest*** speaks of a shaking; a violent storm. It's the Greek word *seismos*, which is usually translated as *earthquake*.

The sea wasn't the only thing shaking that day. These disciples were no doubt shaking in their sandals.

**8:25-27 - *Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" <sup>26</sup> But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"***

The disciples are in a panic. They think they are perishing. They're thinking they're not getting out of this alive.

But contrast this worry of the disciples with the peace of Jesus. He's sleeping! They had to wake Him up!

And Jesus simply asks them, ***'Why are you fearful?'***

Now we can all think of at least a few reasons in that moment why fear might get the better of us. But though the storm is raging, Jesus is at rest.

- This is the quality He wants us to know in the midst of adversity and difficulty. When the storms are blowing do you recognize that Jesus is with you and because of Him we can be at rest?
- With Jesus in the boat, we don't need to fear! Though trials will come, He will not let us drown. We need to take confidence in that.

These men were exactly where Jesus told them to be (8:18). They weren't out of His will and yet they experienced a storm. Why does God allow storms in our lives?

We know from God's Word that there are:

a) Storms of correction.

- This is what Jonah experienced. He was on the run, disobeying God and as he tried to flee, the Lord allowed a storm to come up and prevent Jonah from getting too far. The mariners all knew that this storm was the result of some Divine disapproval.

b) Storms of direction.

- Sometimes the Lord allows storms into our lives to guide us to places we never would have gone otherwise. Paul was an example of this. He was on his way to Rome but God had a pitstop in mind for him on the island of Malta. A storm caused them to get shipwrecked there and Paul was able to minister to the people there.

c) Storms of perfection.

- Here in our text, we see that the disciples were following Jesus and doing the right thing yet a storm came upon them. It's not a storm of correction or direction but a storm of perfection. It was an opportunity for Jesus to reveal His power and deepen the faith of His disciples.
- There are times God will allow difficulty in your life because He knows the good it will do in your life as you are stretched and grow closer to Him. Your knowledge of Him increases and you see in a clearer way how great He is!

Notice the progression here in this story.

They followed Him. They were in His will. They did what Jesus instructed.

Yet they feared as the storms came. Their attention became fixed on the waves crashing around them. But Jesus wanted to replace fear with faith. He wanted their attention fixed on Him. Instead of looking at the terror around them, they needed to look in trust to the One with them. He is our peace! Jesus was at rest, and that's what He wants for us.

- **Joshua 1:9**, *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

## 4. Demons – 8:28-34

**8:28-29 - *When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. <sup>29</sup> And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”***

When we compare this account with the other gospels, we see that these men were living among the tombs, they had no clothes (Luke 8:27). They cried out night and day cutting themselves with stones (Mark 5:5). This was a life of torment.

Understand that Satan is real and his purpose is to destroy. Many people have dabbled with the occult thinking it may be exhilarating or enlightening. Make no mistake about it, Satan’s intent is to destroy.

- **John 10:10a**, *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy..."*
- **1 Peter 5:8**, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."*

There’s nothing to be gained in looking to the occult. It will leave you desolate and ruined.

Now, why or how does a person become demon possessed?

First of all, I believe that Christians cannot be possessed by a demon. Demon possession is when a demonic force takes up residence within you. You become the host body. The Christian, when born again, has the Holy Spirit take up residence in them. How could there ever be a peaceful dwelling place if the Holy Spirit is roommates with a demon. It would be more like a UFC match with the demon getting pulverized for three rounds every time.

But a person becomes demon possessed by opening themselves up to demonic activity. That can come through very deceptive means – New Age enlightenment, occult games, magic, drugs, spiritualism. People can have a literal experience through these means that gives them a sense of help or comfort, but it’s a lie from the enemy. It’s the seduction of evil.

Eventually the person will yield themselves to more of it to where Satan just has control of the person. But his end goal is what we see with this man in our text.



The devil will often promise the world, but you will end up losing everything when giving him access to your life.

As we see in our text, these demons know who Jesus is. There's no mystery here. And they interestingly say: ***Have You come here to torment us before the time?***

They know there's a time where their destruction spree will come to an end. Satan has been given limited dominion over this earth. He's the ruler of this world (John 12:31) and he has his fallen angels carrying out his work. But there is a day coming when they will be judged and sentenced.

In Luke's Gospel they beg not to be put in the *abyss* (Revelation 9:11). That's that place of incarceration for certain demons while they await their final judgment in the lake of fire.

- **Matthew 25:41**, *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'"*
- One day hell will be filled with the devil, demons and all who reject salvation in Jesus. Hell is not their home; they'll be in torment and punishment for eternity.

These demons know Jesus is the Son of God. They know what the future holds. Though their theology may be better than many, they don't live according to it.

- **James 2:19**, *"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"*
- It goes to show it doesn't just matter what you know, there needs to be a surrender and commitment to that truth and to choose to live in Christ.

**8:30-32 - *Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. <sup>31</sup> So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." <sup>32</sup> And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.***

The demons didn't want to be incarcerated so they pleaded to be sent into a herd of pigs. Anything would have been better than being locked up.

- But it begs the question, why wouldn't Jesus have locked them up instead? Wouldn't that have been better? Why did he grant them their request?

“Some commentators solve this puzzle by saying the owners were disobedient Jews whom Jesus judged. That is possible, but the answers to these questions were outside Matthew's field of interest. They are probably part to the larger scheme of things involving why God allows evil. As God, Jesus owned everything and could do with His own as He pleased. These details do, however, clarify the reality of the exorcism and the destructive effect of the demons.

This is the first instance in Matthew of open opposition to the Messiah. Matthew will show it building from here to the Cross. The pigs' stampede also testified to Jesus' deliverance of the demoniacs.”<sup>1</sup>

**8:33-34 - *Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.*<sup>34</sup> *And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.***

This area of the Gergesenes (or Gadarenes as mentioned in the other Gospels) was Gentile country. It was forbidden for Jews to eat pork, so raising pigs would have been a racketeering business. Most likely these were Gentiles raising these pigs. And when they saw what had happened, they came out to meet Jesus and begged Him to depart. Now isn't this the kind of person you want around? He's just delivered two men from evil spirits by which the town folk were terrified of. But it seems the people of the city were more interested in pigs than persons, they chose swine over the Saviour. They valued the material over the spiritual. They wanted bacon instead of heaven.

How about you today? Are there things in your life you'd prefer Jesus to leave alone? Are you willing to count the cost and lay it all down in order to live for Him? There's no greater joy we'll have than living surrendered to Jesus. He has delivered us, saved us, called us to Himself, so that we can experience the life of freedom in Him. May we choose Him above all.

<sup>1</sup> Constable, Dr. Thomas L. (2012) <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/matthew.pdf>