

## ***Matthew 9:1–8***

### **FORGIVENESS COMES FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY**

INI

Picture a man who has committed fraud. He has swindled you out of over 10 thousand dollars. He goes to court. The jury finds Him guilty and requires he pay you back every cent as well as serve at least 10 years no probation. However, in rendering the verdict, the judge declares the defendant cleared of all charges and lets him walk out of court that day a free man. Would you cry blasphemy? Where is the justice? On what authority does this judge have the right to let this man go free of charges? Forgiveness can only truly be granted if it is from the proper authority.

Before we delve into our text, it is important to note one thing in verse 6. (v.6) The word “power” in our text does not exactly convey the idea of the original. Think “authority.” There is a difference between “power” and “authority.” “While “power” is defined as *“the ability to influence somebody to do something that he/she would not have done”* (wikipedia.org), “authority” refers to the legal justification and right to exercise that power.

Although the Greek language does have a word for strictly “power” or “strength” or “ability” or “might,” we don’t find it here. What we find here is “exousia” -- “authority, a ruling power.” Jesus says that He has not just the power or ability to say, “your sins are forgiven you,” but the judicial right to truly pronounce this man “not guilty of all charges.” “that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.”

**FORGIVENESS OF SINS MUST COME FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY.**

#### **1. It comes from God**

It must come from God. **(v.2,3)**

In Luke’s parallel account, he notes that the Pharisees were saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” They were right in one respect. It is God alone who can forgive sins. This is because He is the one who has been sinned against. Sin can only be accurately defined according to the highest authority. Only the Highest authority can tell us what is right and what is wrong. Without this Highest authority to decide what is right and wrong would be left in our hands. What would make your opinion of what is right better than mine? Some argue, what harm has it done. Some think, if I haven’t harmed anyone directly, it must not be wrong. This would excuse you from sins you commit in secret or sins you harbor in your heart. Yet it is the Creator, that highest authority, who defines what is expected of the creature and it is the Creator who is wronged when the creature rebels against the

order established. He has defined what is righteous and holy, and only He has the authority to pardon us when we do wrong. What right did Jesus have or on what basis was He able to forgive this man's sins? Only God has that authority. From the Pharisee's view, this is like the criminal who the jury has sentenced to death being declared innocent by someone standing in the back of the court room: by what authority?

(v.6). The reference to the "Son of Man," was meant to point the listener to the fact that although Jesus appeared as in human form, He was much more. His authority went much higher, it went to the highest source. Jesus was both Man and God. For the skeptics this must be proven: if Jesus has authority over paralysis, then it should follow that he has authority over sin, that He can speak as God. (v.7) Therefore the Son of Man does have authority to earth to forgive sins. **John 5:26–27 – For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.**

FORGIVENESS COMES FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY.

## 2. It is the highest cure

Furthermore, forgiveness requires the highest authority, because it is the highest cure. Notice: what is the first thing Jesus does for this man who is brought to Him on a stretcher? Is it to take away his physical problems and send him on his way? (v.2). Let's look at it this way. Which is the greater problem, the physical, material, financial struggles you face, or the spiritual? Which is the greater disease, being paralyzed in your body, or being paralyzed in your soul? Which ever is the greater problem, will more desperately need a cure. Our bodies from the time of our birth are deteriorating. Whether we cannot walk, we've got a bad back, or we have hip problems, we are aging all the time. Should we be more concerned about helping people with the approaching death of their bodies or about the approaching death of their souls? **Matthew 10:28 – And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** Jesus first deals with the man's greatest problem – sin.

It is easy to lose sight of which is more important: our existence in this world, or our eternal existence in the world to come. We face the danger of not noticing our real problems. We face the danger of not realizing that sin is the highest disease, that it requires the primary cure. This is when a certain sin grows into a lifestyle. Or gaining for ourself a certain luxury outweighs our primary responsibilities – whether it is toward our spouse, our parents, or someone in need, we often set our wants ahead of the needs.

Think of the struggles this paralyzed man in our text faced every day. He was unable to even get a drink of water, or go to the bathroom without relying on someone's help. In his day, this was total reliance on others to survive. They didn't have electric wheelchairs, no automated anything. Having worked in a nursing home, I have seen how the older a person gets the more they must rely on others for survival.

Independence is lost and often depression sets in. An estimated 17 million adult Americans suffer from depression during any 1-year period. As we said before, it is easy to become consumed with negative thoughts about our life in this world – or to get consumed with pursuing what we think will bring us the most happiness rather than finding the lasting happiness in the highest cure.

But this is exactly why Jesus deals with the most urgent problem first. Forgiveness is the highest cure: for a person with paralysis, for a person who is depressed, for every sinner. In the midst of every trouble, what does Jesus say to bring us encouragement? Literally, “be firm in the face of danger or adverse circumstances.” This has nothing to say of the adverse circumstance being taken away – as long as we live in this world sin is going to bring adverse circumstances upon us. Rather Jesus points us to a true source of firmness in the face of instability: and not the immediate cure of paralysis, but first a greater cure – the highest cure, the cross. Jesus has been suffered far worse than any physical trouble we know in this world. He has suffered for your sins. It is on this authority that He has earned that he declares, **(v.2)**.

Forgiveness is the greatest source of encouragement, the highest cure in every trouble you face. It is that firm ground in the midst of adverse circumstance. It reminds you that, though we deserve much worse than paralysis, God, by the highest authority, has promised the opposite. He has forgiven your sins. This is not just the ability to walk, but the ability to leap, to run, to push through the difficult times. To take up your bed of pressures, of stress, of worries, and walk on. No cure the medical industry could ever come up with will meet the greatest of our needs. Look ahead to what this forgiveness means. It means you are headed to a place of the highest deliverance: heaven – where every cure will be ours: no more paralysis, no more hurting, no more depression, no more sin. **FORGIVENESS COMES FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY.**

### **3. And it is passed on to you**

And it is passed on to you. In Matthew 28, Jesus gives the great commission: **Matthew 28:18–20 – And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority (“exousia”) has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...** In this reference to “authority,” Jesus reminds us of this great authority that is passed on to us. Think of it like this: The King rules his kingdom. He has all authority within the realm of His kingdom to do as He pleases. If He wishes His servants to go here or go there, and carry out an edict for Him, they have it on the authority of the King to do so. If the King wishes to set free the captives held out on some exiled island, and He sends you to do it, well then, you have every right to unlock those doors and let those prisoners out. The King then can forgive anyone within His realm who has wronged Him. **John 1:12 – But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (exousia = “authority”) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.**

“Go therefore,” Jesus says. This forgiveness is something you have on the highest authority to pour out on others. This is what the “kingdom of God” is all about: God’s

ruling authority in His Word. **Colossians 1:13 – He has delivered us from the power (exousia = “authority”) of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,** The King has handed down to you the “authority” in His kingdom to forgive sins and invite more souls into His kingdom.

In the Middle Ages, there were many in the church making much the same charges the Pharisees were against Jesus. Next week in Bible Class we are going to take a look at the 95 Theses and find out what was the history behind the selling of indulgences in the Roman Church. Several centuries prior, the teaching developed that forgiveness could only be granted by an ordained priest: and that priest only by virtue of his succession of power under the pope. For any common lay person to say, “your sins are forgiven” was not to be tolerated. “By what authority?” In Thesis #36, Martin Luther writes, “Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.” Later this is what the protestant reformation latched on to: the priesthood of all believers. That any and every believer has the authority to forgive sins. **John 20:23 – If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.**

What a blessed joy it is that in the Lord’s Supper for example, we receive that Highest Authority. In the Lord’s Supper we are given the forgiveness of sins from God Himself. Likewise as we carry this good news into the world, we carry with us the authority from God to forgive sins. In our own relationships too, we have a basis to forgive anyone who harms us. If God has paid for and forgiven the sins of all men, surely we can forgive those who sin against us. When the that individual comes with numerous crimes against you, you have the authority to say, “God has forgiven you” – and furthermore, “I forgive you.”

FORGIVENESS COME FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY. Amen.