

JESUS FORGIVES SIN

A key emphasis in Christ's ministry, as seen in Matthew 8, is the issue of LORDSHIP AUTHORITY demonstrated in various ways. This theme continues on into chapter 9. Here, we will see Christ's unique authority to directly forgive sins, proven by His ability to heal physically. This combination is completely unique to Christ's ministry.

Matthew 9:1 (NKJV)

1 So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

In thematic context, Jesus had crossed over from Capernaum to the region of Gadara, where He had cast thousands of demons out of two demon-possessed men. The demons immediately then entered into a herd of pigs, which then en masse promptly committed suicide by running violently over a steep precipice into the sea.

Then the people from the city came out and begged Jesus to leave their region. And guess what – Jesus left. That's what we have here in Matthew 9:1. When Jesus is not welcome somewhere, He leaves! He does not force His way in. He wants to be wanted! He invites people to come to Him, but He doesn't force it.

Hebrews 10:26 (NKJV)

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

There is no hope for those who sin willfully in rejecting the plain truth that is made obvious to them. A saving faith response WELCOMES the truth and desires to receive Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

In contrast, when the truth of Christ is rejected, Christ goes away. Sometimes, the very worst thing that can happen is that God simply allows people to have their own rebel way. In Romans 1, three times it is stated that God gives depraved rebels over to their own devices, which is the wrath of God on display (cf. Rom. 1:18, 24, 26, 28).

So, being rejected by the **Gadarenes**, Christ then crossed over the Sea of Galilee once again and came to His own city of Capernaum.

Early in His ministry, Christ returned to His hometown of Nazareth and preached on the Messianic text of Isaiah 61. Closing the book He declared, “*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*” But instead of receiving Him as the promised Messiah, the hometown people of Nazareth tried to kill Him by seeking to throw Him over a hill, but miraculously Jesus passed through the midst of them and went on His way, as seen in Luke 4:16-30.

Matthew 4:17 says, “***And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum***”. Having been rejected at Nazareth, Jesus then made Capernaum His “***own city,***” which is to say His ministry headquarters.

Again, we see when Jesus was rejected in Nazareth, He simply moved on to another town (namely, Capernaum) and made it His “own city.” Jesus only stays where He is welcome! In arriving back at Capernaum, the following event transpired.

Matthew 9:2 (NKJV)

2 Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”

Many think this scene very possibly took place at Peter’s house in Capernaum. Mark adds these details...

Mark 2:3–4 (NKJV)

3 Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by **four** men.

4 And when they could not come near Him because of the **crowd**, they **uncovered the roof** where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

Because of the density of the crowd these four friends proceeded to go to the upper level of the house - make an opening to lower the paralyzed man down in front of Jesus.

When it says Jesus “**saw their faith**” it undoubtedly speaks to the faith of them all including that of the paralytic. Sin is forgiven only on the basis of FAITH – so this would indicate that certainly the paralytic also had faith.

Faith and forgiveness are consistently connected in the Scripture. The basis of how we receive God’s forgiveness in salvation is on the basis of

faith. After we are believers if we fall into sin we remain believers. We don't have to come to faith all over again. Rather we then need to get right in our walk through confession as seen in 1 John 1:9. Faith tied to forgiveness of all our sins relates to salvation. And that is what is in view here.

Acts 10:43 (ESV)

43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who **believes** in him receives **forgiveness** of sins through his name.”

It was on the basis of FAITH that Jesus pronounced this man forgiven of sins. Some have tried to make the case that this man's physical ailment was a result of some specific sin in his life and for that reason he was a paralytic. However, the text does not say this.

It is true that sometimes physical maladies can be because of specific sin in the life of a believer but that is not always the case (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29-30; 1 Tim. 5:23; 1 Jn. 5:14).

As seen in John 9:2-3 sometimes physical ailments are not because of any personal sin, but simply because we live in a fallen world. We don't always know the reason why people get sick or have infirmities.

In this fallen world we have two major related sin problems. The entire human race is breaking down physically because of the effects of sin traced back Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:16-19). It is a general condition that effects the whole of humanity. Secondly, we all come with a spiritual problem in which because of sin we are cut off from the life of God and are therefore in need of forgiveness. This is our greatest need.

This is what is in view here in Matthew 9. This is forgiveness related to salvation based on faith. Jesus addressed the man's spiritual need first and foremost. Again, the greatest need is that of forgiveness of sins.

When Jesus said, “**Son, be of good cheer**” the words “good cheer” could be translated “**take courage**” or “**take heart**” (cf. Mt. 9:2; 22; 14:27; Mk. 6:50; 10:49; John 16:33; Acts 23:11). This was meant to encourage and strengthen him spiritually. Properly understood nothing is more important than being forgiven of sin. Nothing is more encouraging and strengthening than knowing all your sins have been forgiven. No matter what else happens this is ultimately what matters in the end.

Thus, Jesus FIRST and foremost did for this man the ultimate and most important thing – on the basis of his faith Jesus forgave him of all his sins.

Someone has said that “**forgiven**” is the most special word in the English language. The Greek word translated “**forgive**” (apiemi) means “**to send away**”. In the common vernacular it means “**to let it go**”.

God is omniscient, knowing all things past, present, future, real, and potential. So when the Bible says in forgiveness God will remember our sins no more the sense is that “*He choses not to remember them in the sense that in His divine accounting He no longer reckons them to our account.*” (Murray J. Harris). They are no longer on our record. God has let it go – never to be held against us again.

Psalm 103:12 (NKJV)

12 As far as the east is from the west, **So far has He removed** our transgressions from us.

Colossians 2:13–14 (NKJV)

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses,**

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed it to the cross.**

Praise the Lord for our wonderful Savior Who forgives sin!