LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 9 (Part 1) :1-8

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Matthew chapter 9 if you are there let's read verses 1 through 8 and then we're gonna pray see what the Lord has for us Jesus stepped into a boat crossed over and came to his own town 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 at this some of the teachers of the law said to themselves this fellow is blaspheming knowing their thoughts Jesus said why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts boy that's a great question which is easier to say your sins are forgiven or to say get up and walk but so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins he said to the paralytic get up take your mat and go home and the man got up and went home and when the crowd saw this they were filled with awe and they praised God who had given such authority to men stop there if you would let's pray Heavenly Father open our hearts to the ministry of your word now today we just really want to tie into what you're saying this is your word it has a spiritual edge to it therefore we need that spiritual understanding we need that spiritual ability to hear your voice today we pray that you would open our hearts help us to tune in to what you're saying to us this morning we ask it in Jesus name Amen we just dealt last week with the man of the tombs and Jesus was over on the other side of the lake in the area of the Gatorines and there he we read last week that he was confronted with a demoniac actually to and took care of that situation now he is back over on the other side of the Sea of Galilee back in familiar territory it says that he returned to his his home area and which is Capernaum by the way and although Matthew doesn't tell us Jesus was teaching it was probably the home of Peter all it says in some of the other gospel accounts is he was teaching in a home and it was crammed full people back in those days when a visiting rabbi was making the rounds and if if you are lucky enough to have that rabbi come to your home you better be prepared for guests because it was just it was just assumed back in those days that if the rabbi was at your house that was an open invitation for the whole town to come to your house and and you better have a few you know refreshments on hand or something and just maybe clean the place because boy they are coming in droves and and Jesus popularity was such that we're told in the other gospel accounts that people were just crowding in to the point where you know I'm sure the doors and windows are overflowing with people did you ever see this

scene on that 1970s version of Jesus of Nazareth I thought they did a pretty good job with this particular story because they actually had Jesus seated in kind of an outdoor patio slightly outdoors and and people are up on the wall and they're crawling over each other to get a place to listen to him teach and and they're all crowded around and I just thought they did a pretty good job well anyway so there's just this crowd of people and Jesus is teaching and and so forth and we are told that four men came along who were carrying a mat upon which was a paralytic a man who could not move his limbs and had been that way for some time these men attempted to get into the area where Jesus was teaching but it was so crowded they could not get through and so even though Matthew doesn't give us the details of how they got in it was really quite ingenious we're told in it's also told by the way in Luke and Mark's gospel account and we are told that these men actually climbed up onto the roof with a man on a mat which is no small task they dug through the roof how would you like that if that was your home and lowered the man on ropes you know still on the mat right in front of Jesus I mean put him right at the feet of you which is great it's like wow you know and it's sort of a cool thing like I said it's rather ingenious I I don't know which one of them came up with it but you know hey what do you say we climb on the roof and dig through the dump and lower him down and I can't imagine the other guys going yeah great idea but that's what they did and everything seems to be going rather nicely here until Jesus bends over and says to the man son your sins are forgiven you and that just kind of sets people off and it really messes with the minds of those who were there that day we'll we'll explain why in just a moment but first we need to think about what Jesus is doing by saying to this man your sins are forgiven there's no record of the man saying anything about sins asking even for forgiveness if anything it is clear that he is there because of his physical infirmity it's it's clear that that's why they brought him there it's like to be healed and yet I find it very interesting do you not that Jesus says to him first thing your sins are forgiven son your sins are forgiven that's fascinating sort of a comment we need to kind of think about that at least for a moment why is Jesus doing that well I believe that he's addressing himself to this man's greatest need and to ours as well you know we forget we think physical healing is probably about the biggest need we've got people all the time will ask us to pray for someone who is enduring some kind of physical infirmity challenge or whatever people that we don't know and they will simply come to us and say would you pray for this person and of course you know the answer is yes we will but many people many people often say nothing about that person's spiritual condition you know is this person a believer are they an unbeliever I mean that that figures into it I think pretty powerfully in terms of how we pray for one thing but it figures into it even more powerfully related to this person's eternal destiny here's the point if there's an unbeliever out there and there are millions who does not know the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ in his work on the cross and that person is enduring some kind of a physical issue for which we are asked to pray let's imagine for a moment that

God graciously hears our prayers and heals that person's infirmity and yet that individual never comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ what have we accomplished exactly I mean I understand the ramifications of physical infirmities and getting over them and I and I'm all for it let me tell you I mean it gets my vote my point is if the person remains an unbeliever haven't we put a rather sad looking band-aid on what in the final analysis is a very temporary condition only to find that this person is ultimately lost and separated from Christ for eternity you know but oh it's crazy you know when we're praying for people when we're asked to pray for people it's like that's the number one issue in this person's life well I beg to differ and I think Jesus does too the number one issue in everyone's life is what is your eternal destiny that's it you know the very first thing Jesus does with this man before anything else is he wants to deal with the issue of spiritual healing that needs to take place in this man's life and that happens through forgiveness the forgiveness of sins and then we can get on to the other issues healing was never meant to be an end in itself as even though we Christians oh we have healing services sometimes we haven't done it here but you know I've been to places where we've done that in fact the church that Sue and I were with even where I was on staff in Montana they had healing services and inevitably you know who came to healing services believers you know who who already know the Lord and there's nothing wrong ultimately with you know I mean James says is any sick among you let him call for the elders let him come and anoint him with oil they'll pray the prayer faith and so forth there's nothing wrong with that it's biblical we should pray for the sick and we do you know we have people come up all the time in obedience to that passage in James and say I'd like to ask the elders to pray for me I've got a physical issue going on or I've got surgery coming up I got this or whatever we are always glad to do that always glad but I just want to remind you the physical healing was never meant to be an end in itself it's a means to an end and if God is going to bring healing into the life of a believer it's because that God is going to extend that person's life that they might serve him with a whole body not that you can't serve him with half a body from the standpoint of maybe I mean I've seen people do some amazing service unto the Lord in conditions that you and I would consider to be unbearable but still that's you know the reason we come for healing is that very thing now the reason an unbeliever the reason we pray for an unbeliever to be healed is not just so they can be healed and then go on their merry way and end up in hell we want to pray for an unbeliever that they might see the power of God that they might be transformed by the love of God and the understanding that God is all-powerful and that they might give their life to Jesus Christ you know so don't come and say pray for my uncle Bob who lives in Tallahassee without telling us what we're praying about exactly because if Uncle Bob doesn't know Jesus we want to add that to the mix because that is Uncle Bob's greatest need of the hour not physical healing so you know so Jesus I like this about Jesus he's dealing with the root cause first and he speaks forgiveness into the the man's life now let's talk about

the response to this statement we know what the response was of the religious leaders the scribes that were there and we'll get to that in a moment but you know it's interesting if we you and I were to hear Jesus say something like your sins are forgiven you know we wouldn't think anything of it it's just like that's totally natural we would expect you to say something like that but this really troubled the people who were there because they thought Jesus was assuming the prerogative of something that only God could do because in the Jewish mind and well I shouldn't just say in the Jewish mind it really should be in the Christian mind to the only reason we can say you're forgiven to people is because we've been given permission to say that by Jesus under the circumstances of forgiveness through Jesus Christ we can declare forgiveness of sins and that's a wonderful thing but the Jews did not feel themselves able to do that because frankly they hadn't been given permission by God to do that and for Jesus to waltz into this situation bend down and look at this man on a mat and to say to him son your sins are forgiven whoa hold the phone this you can't do that now I want you to notice they didn't say that out loud it says they thought it in their minds and they're thinking to themselves he can't do that that's blasphemy and the word blasphemy basically means to insult God okay you're insulting God by taking upon yourself a prerogative that is only his to do so Jesus responding to what he knows they're thinking about if you look again with me in your Bible in verse 5 he asks them a question excuse me it's a he says which is easier to say your sins are forgiven or to say get up and walk alright that's the question now let's think about that for just a moment shall we that's the question which is easier which is easier to say to walk up to somebody and say hey by the way your sins are forgiven or to say to that person rise up and walk I got to thinking about that I thought what if what if there were someone sitting right here in the front row this morning in a wheelchair unable to move their limbs unable to get out of that wheelchair without help from someone else and I thought to myself which would be easier for me to say to that person your sins are forgiven or get up and walk well that's kind of a no-brainer I mean I think it's probably a lot easier to say your sins are forgiven I mean aren't everybody's sins forgiven no stay with me here no not everybody's sins are forgiven even though that probably would be easier to do it may not be true because you know not everybody's sins are forgiven whose sins are forgiven well we know the answer to that let me put it up on the screen for you for first John chapter 1 verse 9 great verse if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness you and I know that our forgiveness of sins is predicated upon the the work that Jesus is already done on the cross and so that is those are the ones whose sins are forgiven those who have confessed their sins come to God on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross and ask for forgiveness their sins are forgiven in fact that verse says that he is faithful to do it and he's also just to do it because injustice someone has paid the price in that person is Jesus okay so we know now whose sins are forgiven but you know we obviously just can't say that to anyone I'm what we do as Christians is we can assure

people that in Christ their sins are forgiven and I can say that to the unbeliever and to the believer for the person who has who's a believer I can assure them hey listen if you confessed your sins your sins are forgiven to the unbeliever who hasn't yet done it I can say if you will confess your sins you will be forgiven I can say that with absolute insurance but I want you to notice that in this context in the story that we're reading this man doesn't ask for forgiveness he doesn't even bring up the issue of sin he's just on a mat lying on a mat paralyzed dropped down from the ceiling to the feet of Jesus and he's just lying there and Jesus completely without any prompting says to the man your sins are forgiven and so what happened is the scribes who were there that day you remember a scribe is someone who writes down the law writes down the Word of God they were considered experts they correctly assumed or correctly understood from what Jesus was saying that that was something only God could say please understand people Jesus did not rebuke them because they were wrong from the standpoint that only God could say it please understand that they were right only God can declare forgiveness of sins again you and I do it because we have permission from God to say to people I assure you your sins are forgiven but for you and I just a walk up to somebody in a crowd that doesn't care about God hasn't thought about God has never once confessed their sins and just a wave our hand over the magically say all you people in this section right here your sins are forgiven I can't do that and they rightly understood that you see and that's why Jesus puts out the question which is easier to say your sins are forgiven or get up and walk now here's please understand some guys although I would consider it easier to say your sins are forgiven for those Jews those were two impossible things K see the answer to the question is neither is easier for me to say to someone your sins are forgiven I'd have to be God for me to say get up and walk I'd have to be God right you you you with me so Jesus is putting them into this sort of a conundrum situation so that so that he can make his ultimate point and then Jesus says in verse 6 so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin see it's one thing to say something remember we talked last week about how talk is cheap but it's it's it's it's one thing to say something but can you back it up you know so he's saying to them and it's such a powerful statement essentially Jesus is saying he's saying this I said something that only God can say now I'm going to do something only God can do and with that we're told that he turned to the man the paralytic and he said get up take your mat and go home and this man who was carried in a total cripple total paralytic got up took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. And Jesus showed by this single act that he had authority to do both. He proved it by healing that man in front of them all. Okay, so there you go. So why?

Why all this stuff? I mean, what's Jesus doing? What's Jesus saying? I think we need to really look into this and we need to ask ourselves the question, what's the really important element of emphasis that God

wants us to see from this passage? Because Jesus both said and did something that the scribes correctly understood to be something that only God could say or to do.

And you see, that's really important because as Jesus' public ministry goes on, he's going to be asked repeatedly this single question, who are you? Who are you? Who are you and what authority do you have to do these things? Who are you? And you know what Jesus is going to say?

He's going to say the one that I have been telling you all along. I'm the one that I've been telling you about ever since the beginning. Ever since I started doing things in your midst, I've been telling you who I am. Here's the point. They weren't listening.

They knew the word. Listen, these scribes knew the word. They knew and understand correctly that to declare the forgiveness of sins to someone without them even asking or whatever, that was something only God could do. They understood that. They also understood that to raise someone up from a paralytic condition, that was also something only God could do.

And they watched with their own eyes as Jesus did those very things and they refused to believe. Why? Because they weren't really listening. I mean, they heard, but they weren't listening. They saw, but they weren't seeing, you know?

And this was a chronic condition among the Jews. Let me show you what God says about his people in Psalm chapter 81. This is a very interesting passage. God says, I am the Lord, your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

Look what it says. But my people would not listen to me. My people would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways.

We hear this passionate cry of the Lord that says, my people won't listen. They hear, but they, you know, but they're not hearing. They see, but they're truly not seeing. And as much as it was a condition of the children of Israel, it remains a condition today. It remains a condition even among us today.

You know, this passage here in Matthew chapter 9. If anything proves that Jesus Christ is God, I mean, this one does. And yet I still run across people who say that Jesus isn't God, nor did he ever claim to be. And it's just amazing to hear that come out of people's mouths. But what it tells me is that what I'm seeing is a repeat of that same stubborn refusal to really listen that Jesus had to confront among his own people.

When he did miracles among them, said things that only God could say, did things that only God can do, and they walked away going, wow, interesting. Well, anyway, you know, you say one more thing that suggests that you might be God, boy, we're picking up rocks, pal. And they're coming your way with deadly force, let me tell you. It's like, wait a minute, weren't you listening? You heard, but did you really hear what was going on?

And truth be told, even though you and I may have embraced the truth of who Jesus is, and maybe you don't have any trouble with confessing the deity of Christ, and you can say, yeah, I've looked in the Word and I can see that Jesus is truly God, I think that we can also continue to struggle with the same issue of listening and really hearing God. And I don't think that any of you would find it surprising that the most common question that I get from people, and frankly, one of the biggest issues in my own life, is what appears to be or what ends up kind of being our apparent deafness to the voice of the Spirit in our lives, you know? That deafness toward the leading and directive voice of the Holy Spirit. Do you know there's people sitting in this room right now who think that they're the only one that can't hear God? They think everybody else can, but they can't.

And they're guilty about it, and they're frustrated by it, and they're like, ugh, I pray about things and I just have such a hard time discerning the will of God, hearing the voice of God. Well, listen, you're not alone at all in that situation. So please understand that. We all deal with this. We pray for direction, and then many times we struggle to rightly discern the voice of the Lord and which way that he is particularly leading.

And there are a lot of reasons for that struggle, I think. And ultimately I don't have time. Someday maybe I'll do a series on why we don't hear God the way we should and talk about some of the things that we can do to rectify that situation. But what I want to do, at least this morning, is I want to bring up two things that I believe are very important, things that we can do toward hearing God better and discerning his voice. And I'll go ahead for you note takers, I'll put them up on the screen here for you.

Steps to listening better. Number one, be aware of the role that stubbornness plays in this whole thing. There's probably nobody who enjoys recognizing themselves as stubborn, but in that passage from the Psalms that we looked at earlier, God said, my people are stubborn, oh, but if they would just hear me and respond. But there's a stubborn streak. And some of us have come to terms with our stubbornness.

Some haven't. But I think that it's really important that we understand the role that stubbornness can play. The Bible calls it being stiff-necked. And it's basically just an unwillingness. It's an unwillingness to hear what he has to say, because so many times we pray about things and we want God to answer a certain

way, and one of the reasons we're not hearing the Lord properly is because he's saying something we don't want to hear.

And you pray about something and then he answers you and you go, wrong answer. Try again. I'm sorry, that's the answer. But what is it that keeps us from hearing what he's saying? Well, stubbornness can play a huge part of it.

I think that it's really important. In fact, let me show you an interesting verse, once again from the Psalms regarding this thing. Look at what God says. First of all, he promises. He says, I will instruct you, okay?

This is a promise. I will instruct you and I will teach you the way you should go. In fact, he says, I will counsel you and I'll even watch over you. But he says, listen, here's a warning. Don't be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding, but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

See, sometimes we want to pray, but rather than pray and really seek spiritual understanding and so forth, we just kind of want this voice, you know, or this, you know, God, couldn't you just like project an arrow on the wall and say, go this way? You know, that sounds a lot like what you would do to a mule. Not that you'd project an arrow, but you, what you do is you put a bit and bridle, you put a bit in their mouth and a bridle over their head and you pull, you go this way, right? That's what you do to a dumb animal. God doesn't want to treat his children like dumb animals.

Now it's not beneath him, let me tell you right now, but he doesn't want to. He wants you to grow in your understanding. He wants you to not be like that stubborn, dumb animal that needs that apparatus over the head and then a jerk on the range so that you get that animal to follow you or to go where you, you, you, you want it to go. God wants you and I to understand that he is instructing, he is teaching, he is counseling in our lives and you and I are to grow in the understanding of where that teaching, you know, where that counseling, where that instruction is leading. We do that by delving into the word and by confessing our stubbornness.

To follow and I think that we need to take a passage like this one in psalm 32 and we need to make it a prayer point Lord help me not to be stubborn. I don't want to be stubborn. I want to resist, you know I don't want to be somebody who resists you and maybe I'm not getting the answers in the direction that I am asking for because I'm just I Just don't want to go that way So, you know forgive me for my stubbornness and and I want to be a person who Hears your voice You know, I can be taught I can be

instructed You know that teachable spirit is huge you guys You all know it those of you who are parents you see it in your kids or not You know, we love it in our kids when we can give them an instruction and they just go for it don't we But But you know every parent knows and understands what it's like when you address something in your child that you see as a problem and you go to them with all hopefully love and Diligence and sincerity and you say son or daughter listen This just isn't good and they look at you like who are you to be telling me squat Just Close your mouth and carry on with your business and let me live my life. Do you know what that is? It's an unteachable spirit You can't instruct a spirit like that you can't instruct a heart like that God God knows the same thing So, you know God give me a teachable spirit not stubborn not stiff-necked but teachable And then Secondly the second thing that we're gonna put on our list of things here is ask God for a listening heart and you know this is something we did when we Started off our lesson here today, you know, I try to do that every every Sunday every Wednesday night I try to include the words or at least some semblance of the words that say in essence Lord What we're about to do digging into your word is a spiritual exercise in order to to to gain from this spiritual exercise We need spiritual Abilities to receive, you know spiritually or spiritual eyes spiritual heart to be able to receive what your word is Giving us and so I think that coming to the Lord and saying God give me a listening ear I want to hear your voice is an important prayer for us to pray regularly You know, you guys probably remember for those of you who are around when we Went through our study in Revelation do you remember Jesus dictated those letters through John to all those seven churches in Asia Minor and Almost almost for each one.

He said to him who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says To him who has an ear didn't all the people have ears. Yeah, but he's not talking about these right here He's talking about that spiritual ear that ability to spiritually hear the voice of God to him who has an ear Let him hear, you know the reason that Jesus Did a miracle like the one that we read here in Matthew chapter 9 and the people although they were in awe You know, they kind of walked away kind of like, you know whatever it's because they didn't have spiritual ears and we need to pray for that kind of a Spiritual ear and if you will cry out to the Lord and tell him that you don't want to be slow to hear you want? To be quick to hear and you ask him for spiritual hearing. I believe that he will respond to that prayer I believe that prayer delights the Lord. I Mean what would you think if one of your children came up to you and said I want to be able to hear your heart Better when you instruct me, wouldn't you be delighted?

I Mean, would you say to him? Get away from me. Of course not You'd you'd you'd probably wrap your arms around him. I love you, you know sort of a thing listen, God is just delighted when his children come before him and just you know, Lord, I I Confess to you my stubbornness and my unwillingness

sometimes to go where you want me to go But I need also a spiritual ear to hear I need that Spiritual discernment and illumination to understand what you're saying to me I think that those things are hugely important and I think that they are important lessons that we derive from Matthew chapter 9 these first eight verses You