

Matthew 15:29-39 The Truth About Healing

For today we're finishing out Matthew 15:29-39. There are two sections here:

Verses 29-31 The Performing of the Signs of the Messiah

Verses 32-39 The Provision for the Four Thousand

Our text is also found in Mark 7:31-37, if you want to look at it there at your leisure.

At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus was up north - north of Jerusalem at the Sea of Galilee - and the religious leaders of the Jews sent a delegation to confront Jesus because His disciples, by their lifestyle and habits, were breaking the traditions of the elders. They were transgressing against the traditions. And Jesus said, "Why do you by your traditions transgress the Word of God?" And He explained to the crowds what He meant, is that religion regulates everything outside of you, in fact, what you take in your mouth. The dietary laws were very a big item for the Jews. And Jesus said to the crowds, it is not what goes in your mouth that counts, but it's what goes out of your mouth that counts because what goes out of your mouth comes forth from the heart, and your heart is where the sin is.

So, with this opposition, He traveled west to the east shore of the Mediterranean Sea to Tyre and Sidon, two cities. Phoenician cities, these are Gentiles not Jewish people. The Jewish delegation confronted Him, so He got away from them and all the confrontation and went over to the Gentiles and a Syrophenician woman approached Jesus and said, "Have mercy on me, Son of David." Interesting a Gentile calling Jesus by His messianic title, *Son of David*. "Have mercy on me. My daughter is severely demonized, and she needs Your help." The text says that Jesus didn't even answer her a word. He didn't even pay attention to her, which is what shocks me. She's asking for mercy and He didn't even give her the time of day.

So, she goes after the disciples and the disciples come to Jesus and say, "Can't You send her away? Now she's chasing after us trying to get help." And Jesus said, "I have not been sent, except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She is a Gentile.

So, she comes back to Jesus again and just simply says, "Help me." And Jesus said, "I can't give help because the main meal belongs to the children," being the Jews, and "the meal" being *the gospel*. He says, "It is not right to give the meal (or a part of the meal) to the dogs." He called her a dog, but she continued to pursue Him. "But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table." And He says to her, "I have not seen such great faith. Let it happen to you according to your desire."

All are interpreted to be offensive remarks. Calling for mercy and not answering. She calls for help and He says, "I don't give the meal to the dogs." And she says, "I don't want the meal, I just want a crumb. I just want a little crumb. That's all." As I shared with you last week, that is genuine faith. Faith does not get offended at how God answers or when He answers or how He answers. True faith says, "You are right Lord, everything that You've done. I asked for

mercy, You didn't pay any attention. I deserve that. I come for help and you call me a dog, and I am, I am a dog, religious dog. But, you know, even the dogs get the crumbs from the table." And He says, "Based on that I will help you." Faith takes people all the way to the end. He brought faith to fruition. She could've stopped in the middle of that whole scenario and just said, "Well then, forget You!" and walked away; but she wouldn't leave until she got a crumb from Jesus because that's all she needed. All you and I need is a crumb. That's it. A crumb from Jesus is more powerful than anything else. It's all we need.

Now, what is interesting with our text today, in verses 29-31 The Performing of Signs of the Messiah here. In verse 29, **And Jesus departed from there**, that is, departed from the city of Tyre. Remember, He is on the east shore of the Mediterranean, the cities of Tyre and Sidon. He leaves there and goes back over to the Sea of Galilee. **Jesus came alongside the Sea of Galilee**. He's now on the east side and Mark 7:31 tells us that He came to the place called Decapolis, which means *ten cities*, in that area on the east side. It is, again, Gentile territory. Very important to understand the text today, these are Gentiles, not Jewish people.

And having gone up into the mountain, He was sitting down there. And great multitudes came to Him having with themselves (that is, *among themselves*, this big crowd) **the lame, the blind, the mute, the maimed, and many others, and they threw them down**, that's the literal translation. Most English translations try to soften it by saying *they cast them down*. They literally **threw them down alongside the feet of Jesus; and He healed them**. They didn't throw them down out of disrespect or even abuse, it was an act of urgency. They didn't have time to even lay them down. They were coming, and they were casting them down in front of Jesus for Him to touch them and to heal them and to minister to them. Then the text says, **And He healed them**.

Verse 31, The Conclusion of the Crowds. We will see in the next section that this went on for three days. **So that the crowds became astonished, seeing the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing**: here's the key: **and they glorified the God of Israel**. Notice, the Gentiles after seeing all the healings and receiving Jesus for who He is, the Messiah, they glorified the God of Israel. This is what the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people were supposed to be doing. Instead they were in contention with Jesus, trying to find something wrong, complaining about the way He does things. But **They glorified the God of Israel**.

Now, I have to say, we are going to stop for a minute and talk about a certain subject. I've talked about it before but it's very dear to my heart because I deal with it all the time. And you say, "Well I don't have a problem with it." Well, I do, and I deal with it, but I have to establish what the Scripture teaches about healing. The people were astonished over Jesus healing and like I said, in a moment we are going to see it took place over three days.

Matthew seems to insert these little verses that talk about the healing of Jesus about every two chapters, to promote the revelation of God through Jesus Christ through these healings. And Matthew inserts these about healing to present the signs of the Messiah. Now I want to state right away, right off the bat, before I get into this because people ask me all the time, "So, do you

believe in healing?" Yes, I do. I've been healed. I've seen the Lord perform just remarkable miracles with healing.

I think I told you once about Julie, who was in a mental hospital in Norwalk. Don't ask me why I was there, but I was. I was visiting a patient of theirs and the Norwalk Mental Hospital covers an entire city block, it's huge. I came in, came in the door, and you have to check in there at the counter. And there are patients all over the place, in the hallways and everywhere. People listening the messages off the walls from outer space, I mean they have the whole thing there. But there's one gal by the name of Julie. She was 18 years old, she hadn't spoken, and all she did was walk the perimeter hallway of this institution. If people said anything to her, she didn't acknowledge it, and she just kept walking. I saw her once or twice and inquired as to, you know, because she does the same thing all the time. They said, "That's Julie," and they told me about her and I said, "Okay."

On this particular evening, I walked in the door and came up to the counter to check in. And Julie was walking around the corner and coming to the back, back behind me down the hallway. And any way she comes up behind me and grabs me from behind. Now, I want to paint this picture - not of a spiritual giant but I was shaking in my boots. I thought I was dead and the nurse at the desk peeked around the corner and says, "Julie let Reverend Klein go." And Julie says, "Jesus healed me." And they got up and the other nurses got up and they ran around the counter and "Julie! Julie!" and they were talking with her and I'm standing there, you know, nobody cared about me. You know, I'm standing at the counter, leaning on the counter, saying, "Oh, I just saw my life go before me," and I look back and here is Julie just talking with the nurses. And so, we got into a discussion there and they said that they're going to put her under lockdown and have the psychiatrist look her over. They looked her over for three days and called her parents and said, "Come get your daughter, she's perfectly fine." I didn't do a thing. I just walked in, right? I had my back to her. I gave no formula, made no prayer, nothing, zero. She just comes up and grabs me. That was a testimony to me. The Lord's testimony is, "You go where I lead you to go, I'll take care of the rest. You don't have to do anything. You just obey Me and have fellowship with Me."

Another time, there was a fellow by the name of Jimmy. He was a hit man in the Mafia and he was in his, I think it was 10th or 12th hour of withdrawals from heroin, and he calls me up on the telephone and asked me if I could help him. So, I went and picked him up. Just like out of the movies, I had to go over to a high school in the dark, blink my lights and then he came out of bushes, you know. And he says, "Can you take me to Downey because they have a hospital there where you can admit yourself and then kick it yourself without getting everyone else involved." So, I drove him to Downey, but we got there about 9 o'clock at night and they had closed. They told me they can only admit people from 8 to 5. I said, "Yeah, but I've got a guy in his 12th hour of withdrawals out here on heroin, what do I do with him?" They said, "Well, we can't do anything until 8 o'clock tomorrow morning."

So, I called some people and said, "What do I do?"

They said, "Well, there is an ex-motorcycle gang that lives over there in Downey, they are all saved now, they're all Christians, why don't you take him over there for the night?"

I said, "Perfect."

So, I drove him over there, went up, they said, "Hey Brother Bill! How's it going?" They had the leather jackets and motorcycle out there, the whole bit, they looked the part. They said, "We just got through with Bible study," and, "Come on in and join us!"

I said, "I got Jimmy here," and Jimmy's just going crazy, he is in a bad way.

And they said, "Oh! What do we got here?"

I said, "Well, I thought I'd bring Jimmy over, maybe you can help him. He is in his 12th hour of withdrawals," and I told them about the hospital. "The hospital won't admit him, so I thought I'd bring him over here."

They said, "Well, let's go in and pray for him."

I said, "Oh, okay."

They said, "No, no, no. You come in and pray for him."

I said, "Me?! Uh, I don't know what to pray."

So, we got in inside and here's a motorcycle gang encircling us. I'm facing Jimmy and this motorcycle gang is encircling us, praying. "Go ahead, Brother Bill, you just go ahead and pray. Pray for his healing, whatever you want to pray for." So, I put my hands on Jimmy's shoulders and I said, "Lord God," and I just started praying. I did pray for healing. "Pray that You'd take it away, give him help. Jesus reveal yourself to Him," etc. etc. I had my eyes closed while I'm praying and right in the middle of my prayer he falls to the floor and I'm thinking, "Oh goodness, now he has died." And I kept praying and then I got through and I just kind of took my hands off of him and I kind of looked around, like, *"What did I do? Poor Jimmy is on the floor."*

So, Jimmy gets up off the floor and he is perfectly fine. Perfectly fine. And the brothers from the motorcycle gang come and say, "Hey, there you go brother! See? Told you all you needed to do is pray and lift him up to the Lord," you know? And so, they were hugging Jimmy and they told Jimmy that Jimmy could stay there with them and sit in on their Bible studies and that they would give him a place to live. I walked out of that place thinking, "Lord, You're just showing me that it is not man." It's the Spirit of God. It is not your formula, or what you do, or what you don't do. I had no faith, didn't even believe anything was going to happen.

And what was interesting is, about the three months, I guess it was about three months later, I got a call from Jimmy saying that he's leaving the group that he is with and that the Lord had laid on his heart to go back and help the people that he had harmed before. He was the hit man and he was also an insurance collector, if you know what that is for the Mafia: go to the businesses and collect money or else you are going to destroy their businesses, it's kind of their "insurance policy." So, he ruined a lot of people's lives, killed people, ruined their businesses. I said, "Well, that's kind of dangerous, isn't it? I mean, you can't go back."

He says, "I know. They will catch up with me and kill me, but it's what the Lord wants me to do, it's what I have to do for a clean conscience."

I said, "Okay."

A while later, I got a call from Jimmy's brother Tony, who told me that they had found Jimmy dead in Florida and that he and the family wanted to know if I would do the funeral, which is a whole other story because I think it was the first funeral that I had ever done. In the funeral home, you know, the music is playing, and the people are filing in and I am sitting in the front row waiting for the funeral director to introduce me. And so, after everybody got in - I didn't even know how many people were there, I had no idea, I heard them mulling around and all the noise. And so, he introduced me, and I got up and I looked out there, I looked over the crowd, nothing but gang and mafia leaders. Black hat, black tie, the whole bit, just like you see it in the movies. So, I'm up there and I had a message all prepared and I just went blank. And I just stood up there and went, "hamana hamana hamana." And these guys are looking at me like they're going to shoot me any minute, at least that's the feeling they gave me. So, I forgot my message and so I just gave them Jimmy's testimony of how he found Christ and why his end came, and so that was the end of my association with Jimmy and his family.

But in my life, there has been nothing but miracles year after year after year and it wasn't because of anything that I did, it wasn't because of any formula that I prayed. I was just concentrating on obeying the Lord, just be where God wants me to be, He's in me, He will take care of the rest. So yes, I believe in healings. Do I believe Jesus heals today? Yes, He does. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do I believe He heals the same as we are studying in the Gospels? The answer is no. The reason being the Bible presents that when Jesus healed people, the Bible calls it a sign.

In John 6:2

Great multitudes followed Jesus, because they saw the signs, which He did on them that were sick.

In John 6:14

Then those men when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said this, "Of a truth, this is the prophet that should come into the world."

In John 6:26

(this is the crowd of that He fed, the 5000 that He fed, that we studied back in Matthew 14)

Jesus answered and said to them, "You seek Me not because you saw the signs, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled."

And then, at the end of the Gospel of John (John 20:30-31), John says, And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing you might have life through His name.

The Bible calls them signs because that's what Jesus came to do. When Jesus was here, He fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. The prophecies of what Messiah would do when He came.

Back in Matthew chapter 11, you remember with John the Baptist, John the Baptist sent his disciples and said, "Are you He that should come, or do we look for another?" And Jesus quoted from the book of Isaiah, "Tell him the blind receive their sight, the lame are walking, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." So, He says, "Go tell him what signs, go tell him what miracles I'm doing if I'm the Messiah or not," because there were promises of what the Messiah would do when He came in order to show people that He indeed was the Messiah. Jesus said, "And blessed is He whomever shall not be offended in Me. Go back and tell John what you're seeing, the people that are being healed. I'm performing the signs of the Messiah who was to come."

So, He fulfilled the promises for the Messiah, but I am going to make a statement to you - and you might even disagree with it, but that's okay if you want to be wrong - there is no promise in the Scripture that states that the Lord promises to heal everyone that is sick. Nothing. There's no promise. It's *inferred* or *implied* by people. He doesn't promise to heal everybody who is sick. He did it on occasion when He was here as a sign that He was the Messiah, but He doesn't do that today. He heals. He does heal, but He also does not heal. There's no promise that a person is going to get healed because God has purposes for all the difficulties, and all the health challenges, and all the health issues that we have.

Besides you have to take in consideration that everybody that gets sick and dies and gets healed from something, either sickness or death, that physical healing is temporary. It's just for a moment. You can get healed of one thing. I can be healed of cancer, but I'm still getting older, my body is still aging and dying, and I will die of something else because that's the way life is. And God does not promise to spare me from that. Everyone that Jesus healed, every single person that Jesus healed or raised from the dead, has died. They are not here. He didn't perform healings in order to preserve the human race or to preserve human life. If He healed somebody today, it is because (1) He has something for them to do and this sickness is going to get in the way; and/or (2) so that He can be glorified when people see that they have been healed. But they're still going to get sick again.

This is what I love, and this is what I started to enjoy about ministry lately, especially with the people who say, in fact somebody told me last night, that I need to claim my healing. I said, "Where does it ever say in the Scriptures to claim your healing? And there is no promise that I will be healed. The Bible does not say that."

"Oh yes! Oh no, it's ours. It's for everybody."

This is great. Instead of debating with people and contending with people, I go along for the ride. I say, "Okay, if you're right, if God wants everybody healed, let's go, you show me. You go do it."

"Oh no, no. People have to have faith."

Remember the Syrophenician woman that just wanted the crumb? That Jesus said, "Great is your faith, let it be to you according as you desired"? She was asking for her daughter. It wasn't her daughter that had faith, it that was the Syrophenician woman. It was not the centurion soldier's servant who was sick and dying that had the faith, it was the centurion. So, I

said, "It is not the person who is sick that needs to have faith, you have faith." Boy, that puts them right on the spot.

"Well, I, uh, ah..." they stammer, and they don't know how to get out around it. The proof is in the pudding. We've been talking about this doctrine for two thousand years and people still are not all healed, all the people still are not healed. Some get healed, some don't. It's up to the Lord. Does He have the ability to heal? Yes, He does. And He can do it anytime He wants to, for whatever reason He wants. There's no guarantee because the Lord has purposes for what He's doing.

And so, I want to let you know that I still do get in debates with people, especially who present the false healing doctrines of our day, but I've also taken another avenue as the Lord has led me just to say, "Okay, I'll go along for the ride. If you say what that guy on TV is preaching is true, then go ahead, show me, show me how it works." They can't do it. It's not there. It's not real. The proof is in the pudding.

If Jesus wants everybody healed, if Jesus wants everybody rich, hey, I'm all for it. I'll follow along all the rich people and hand out tithing envelopes. If you say God wants everybody to be rich, show me. "Well you have to work at it." No, I'm not talking about working at it. I'm talking about Jesus. The proof is in the pudding. When Jesus performed miracles, it was a sign of His divinity and of His Messiahship. Since two thousand years ago, He has never done it the same. The proof is in the pudding.

In Matthew 15:32-39, The Provision for the Four Thousand. We studied, back in chapter 14, The Feeding of the Five Thousand. This is now the feeding of the four thousand and they are two different feedings. Jesus, in Matthew 16:9-10, spoke of the two different feedings of the four thousand and of the five thousand, so they're not the same. But here, for our understanding today, as we pass through this text, what the important thing is that the feeding of the five thousand in Matthew chapter 14 was for Jewish people; the feeding of the four thousand here is for Gentiles.

Jesus having called His disciples to him, said, "I have compassion upon the crowd, because already three days they are continuing with Me, and they do not have anything that they might eat: and I do not desire to send them away fasting, so that they will not ever faint in the way." The same crowd that's been hanging around Him for three days, bringing the sick for healings, and He says, "I have compassion on them, they haven't eaten in three days. They have been following Me and they haven't eaten."

And His disciples said to Him, "From where should there be for us in the wilderness so many loaves of bread so as to satisfy such a great crowd?" It sounds like the same thing they said last time. Haven't they learned the lesson that Jesus fed the five thousand miraculously with the little boy's lunch? And now they're asking, "Where are we going to find food for all these people?" Except these are Gentiles. Remember, earlier with the Syrophenician women, Jesus said, "I did not come except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," so they don't expect a miracle from Jesus because these are Gentiles. So, if You are not going to perform a miracle, then share with us where we are going to find bread.

And Jesus says to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven loaves of bread and a few small fish." The normal food for that area.

And He commanded the crowds to recline upon the ground. Back in chapter 14 He had them recline on the grass, the five thousand.

And when He took the seven loaves and the small fish, when He gave thanks, He broke them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the crowd.

The Consequences, **And all did eat, and were (not filled) but satisfied.** They didn't just get something to eat, they were all full and satisfied.

And they took up the leftover of the fragments seven baskets full. Different word for baskets here, than in Matthew chapter 14. These are Gentile baskets and they are big enough to carry a human being in. As a matter fact, Paul was let down on the Damascus Road in Acts 9:5, over the Damascus wall in a basket, and it's one of these large baskets that you can carry human being in. Back in Matthew 14, they were the small Jewish baskets, hand baskets that you'd carry food in as you're walking.

And the ones eating were four thousand men. See, before it was five thousand men, **apart from women and children.** So, there were about 16,000 to 20,000 people all told, with women and children, that Jesus fed.

The Conclusion, **And having sent away the crowds, He entered into the boat, and came to the borders of Magdala.** So, He goes over, He is on the east side, He gets into a boat and travels over to the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Mark 8:10 tells us that the disciples accompanied Him as He went in the boat.

That finishes Matthew chapter 15 for us, but it's important to note the thread in all of this. Jesus said, "I have compassion on the crowds." The word *compassion*, **σπλαγχνος** (splanknos) is the word for *intestines*. And they would use of the names of the inner organs in order to express deep longing and love. **σπλαγχνος** (splanknos), *having compassion* means that *you are moved in your inner being over someone's plight or someone's condition*. That Jesus would even care about their food. Instead of saying, "I've healed you, now go out and find yourself some lunch." He had compassion on them because He didn't want them to faint along the way, so He provided for them. Jesus is a provider. He provides out of compassion, not out of responding to people's formulas that they work.

This is the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ who not only cares about people's physical condition, but food and eating, but above all He uses that to manifest His Messiahship as Savior. If a person gets fed and a person gets healed, but they never receive Christ, then it was for nothing. These texts were written so that people would read them and be impressed, astonished like the crowd was, saying, "This is God in action, manifesting Himself to me, saying, He wants to be my Savior. He wants to be my Lord and He wants to take care of me." That's the message of the text.

Let's close with prayer.