

Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 8:1-27

“Power Over All”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

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There are three familiar attributes of God that we need to remember:

- 1.** He is omniscient (that is, He knows all).
- 2.** He is omnipresent (that is, He is everywhere all the time).
- 3.** And He is omnipotent (that is, He is all powerful).

But it's primarily the last attribute ... His omnipotence, that **chapter 8, and much of 9**, emphasize. A concept that we verbalize, but probably don't come close to comprehending.

I think that very idea of God being able to exercise unlimited power without oversight is bigger than most of us can honestly grasp.

- 1.** Unlimited power over men, women and children.
- 2.** Power over governments and armies.
- 3.** Power over angels, power over Satan and his demons.
- 4.** Power over the earth, the weather, the sun, moon and stars.

Unlimited and unchecked power over this universe and all it contains as well as all that's outside of it.

Q. What could you do with that kind of power?

When you stop and try to absorb the magnitude of that, it kinda adds new meaning to ...

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge ...

The God that we serve has no one to correct Him ...

scold Him ...

punish Him ...

redirect Him ...

or even counsel Him

....

And yet He chooses to be an all good God. He chooses to be a God of love. No one forces Him. He doesn't have a mom reminding Him to "play nice". It's by an act of His sovereignty that He loves, and cares for, us.

Over the **next two chapters**, **Matthew** reports account after account of the Lord's victories over a wide variety of foes. He shows His power over illnesses ...

Space ...

His followers ...

the weather ...

demons ...

sin and even ...

power over death itself.

So let's have a look ...

Verse 1: Of the 72 action-packed verses in **chapters 8 & 9** ... **this verse** may well be the most important for us to hear and apply.

I say that because the **next 71 verses** are a record of signs and wonders performed by Jesus ... not for our instruction, but to build our faith and to give us confidence in the Lord's power. But **this verse** ... is for our instruction.

It's an example that we can't miss.

Q. Because when Jesus comes down from the mountain top, where does He go? --
Straight into the valley of service.

Jesus has been on the hilltop ... fellowshiping and sharing words of encouragement and instruction with the brethren. Very much like the times when we fellowship and hear Jesus' words. It's analogous to our time in church.

Q. How many people do you know that would say "I know I really should be in church" as if that was the fulfillment of their Christian duty? – But the **book of Acts** makes it very clear that church is the place we recharge our batteries and outside of church is where we primarily spend that energy.

The **4th chapter of Ephesians (verse 12)**, says that the purpose of church is to "**equip the saints**".

Q. But equip them for what? Is it so they can show up for the next church service? – No ... it says to equip the body for the "**work of service**". To go and make disciples.

We all love mountain top experiences. Times of close communion with the Lord and times of great fellowship with God's people, but if we try to limit the Christian life to that ... we will become stale very quickly.

Paul says to Timothy in ...

2nd Timothy 2:21 ... be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

We are to be God's vessels ... like a pot.

Q. And what are pots made for? -- To be filled and emptied and filled and emptied.

Q. But what happens to the pot that gets filled and then just sits that way? -- The water begins to go bad ... and stagnant water begins to stink pretty quickly.

Our time in church is the filling process, but if we don't walk into the valleys of the harvest and empty our pots ... we too will begin to stink.

But the good news for the stinky is that, just like that pot of stagnant water ... your stinkiness will disappear just as quickly as you pour yourself out.

So, Jesus sets the example ... He leaves the mountain top and walks straight into the valley to be emptied in service.

Q. So, my question as we begin this study ... is ... are you emptying your pot? -- If you want God to fill you up then you have to empty yourself out.

So, enjoy those mountain tops, cherish them, but then follow the Lord's example and go empty your pot. The Lord will never run out of "**Living water**" (**John 4:14**), with which to fill you back up.

Verses 2-4: If you're not familiar with it, leprosy is a highly contagious disease of the skin. It begins as red bumps, but quickly turns into patches of white skin with no feeling whatsoever.

The end result is that the skin and other body parts fall off. One of the most grotesque of human diseases.

And because Leprosy is so contagious, the man in this story, would have been separated from society and from his family. And you can bet that as this leper approached the Lord, the large crowd that followed Him gave him a wide berth.

But in response to this man's worship and his faith-filled, humble request ... the Lord cleansed him.

Notice the man's words ... "**Lord, if You are willing**". He didn't say "I claim it in Your name" or "I prayed in faith so You have to". Instead He came humbly and reverently

with genuine faith in the Lord's ability to do the impossible. He came in worship with his request and the Lord honored it.

Q. But ... you gotta wonder ... why did the Lord tell this man to keep quiet about what had happened? – Well, we get the rest of the story in ...

Mark 1:45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

On one hand you have to admire the man's heart to share the good news, but on the other ... the Lord's instructions were for the best and should have been heeded.

Verses 5-13: A centurion was a Roman captain. A gentile or, non-Jew, with authority over 100 men. And this one receives high praise from the Lord.

It says that the Lord “**marveled**” at, or admired this man's faith. No doubt, a reference to **the verse before it** which indicates that this centurion actually had a grasp on what I suggested is so difficult for us ... the Lord's limitless and unchecked power.

The centurion knew his own power over the men he commanded ... and under Roman law, that was power unto death. But he also recognized that Jesus had that power over all of creation.

In **verses 11&12**, we see Jesus exercising another of those three divine attributes ... His omniscience. As He looks into the hearts of this, mostly Jewish, crowd of followers and sees that some of them were still trusting in their blood-line to get them into Heaven.

When John the Baptist was trying to call the Jews to salvation he said ...

Luke 3:8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

So, the paraphrased message here in **Matthew** is that the gentiles (from the east and the west) who had trusted in Jesus would join the Old Testament Saints at the Banquet Table in Heaven, but the Jews who were still holding onto their ancestor's righteousness would be condemned.

Verses 14-17: It's difficult to imagine what life would have been like for the disciples ... walking and talking with Jesus.

But **verse 14** gives us a limited picture that makes it look like they were just headed over to Peter's house to hang out. Maybe grab a bag of unleavened pretzels and watch the game or something.

And **Mark's gospel** gives us an additional glimpse when it says in ...

Mark 1:29 ... immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

It's like the guys just getting together. And that thought really ministers to me. It reassures me that the God we serve is not an untouchable or out-of-touch God. He's right there with us all the way.

But it also appears that their "kick-back" time was preempted by the Father as the record here indicates ... there were ministry needs parading through the door including Peter's own mother-in-law.

Verses 18-22: Still with a large crowd around Him, the Lord orders His disciples to prepare the boat for crossing the Sea of Galilea. And just like we saw in the Sermon on the Mount ... the crowd overhears what He's saying.

And some of them weren't ready to see Him go so they make pledges of allegiance and offer to go with Him.

Two men want to follow the Lord and in each case the Lord is willing to accept them, but His response to their pledges seems like a bit of a "wet blanket".

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit ...

Peter's advice to "**keep sober in spirit**", is what the Lord's response exemplifies. We're not to be high on emotions or swelled with temporary enthusiasm, but we're to be sober and sound-minded.

Luke 14:28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?"

When the Lord makes these statements to these two men ... it catches them off guard because they'd made their pledges on emotions and not from a sober spirit. They hadn't counted the cost!

To the scribe, the Lord says, "A life of following Me, means that you must be willing to follow Me, not just on the mountain tops, but also into some long and rugged valleys."

To the disciple who requested a leave of absence to bury his father ... He says, "Do whatever you think is best, but if you want to be a true disciple you'll have to get your priorities straight."

The commandment of ... **Exodus chapter 20, verse 3** says ...

"You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness 5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God

God insists on being number one in our lives!

Q. The question that these men had to answer is the same obvious question that each of us have had to answer and will have to answer many more times before this Christian journey is over ... is the Lord more important to you than
(you fill in the blank)?

Verses 23-27: Sailing from Capernaum to the far bank of the Sea of Galilee is about six miles ... so it's a large and deep body of water.

And this storm was intense ... the boat was being covered by waves and filling with water but ...

Q. What was Jesus doing? -- He was sleeping. This is the picture of an exhausted man. He'd ministered Himself to exhaustion and at that point, He could comfortably and confidently rest and leave care for Himself to His Father.

Q. But despite His exhaustion and despite the disciples' lack of faith ... what did He do when they cried out to Him? -- He ministered some more!

When you feel like your pot's empty ... pour out just a little bit more.

What a powerful example of omnipotence ... Jesus rebukes this storm with a word!
Mark's gospel (4:39), tells us that He stood, raised His hand and said, "Hush, be still".

We have a lot of thunder storms here and some can get pretty intense. We even have an occasional, nearby tornado.

Back in 1999 there was a Tornado on the south side of Oklahoma City with winds of over 300 miles per hour earning it the nickname of "greatest force in nature". And that may indeed be true ...

But never forget that we serve the God who controls "the greatest force in nature" ... with a word!

No wonder David could say in ...

**Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me ...**

Q. Why would we be afraid of any valley with God beside us?

Conclusion: I remember being in grade school and having three recesses every day.
Man ... that was the life!

And being a boy ... the best part of recess was the competition in all of its various forms. Usually it was football, but every once in a while, we'd play tag or red rover or slaughter ball.

The norm was to choose two captains and then those captains would choose their players one by one. The best players were picked up front and the less athletic were taken when everyone else was gone.

And that piece of grade school history, illustrates a human principle that ... we all want to be on the best team.

That's why the captains picked the most athletic people first. They wanted to be a part of the winning team.

Matthew's record in chapter 8 shows us some of the most powerful acts ever recorded and if you were one of those captains, that's the kind of power you'd want on your team.

No doubt ... there are some in here this morning who aren't yet on God's team ... we can fix that before you leave today, but **this chapter** speaks more to those who are already a part of this winning team.

If you, like me, are a part of God's team ... then victory is a foregone fact. If you don't believe that ... you need to re-read the end of the book!

Q. So, the question is ... are you living like a winner?

Q. Are you living like you're part of a team that can NOT lose?

And finally ... if you're a part of God's team then you need to realize that the game's not played on the mountain tops ... it takes place in the valleys.

**Ps 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me ...**

And when the Lord's with you ... you can't lose!