



MATTHEW • DISTILLED : establish the instruction (1Co 9:1-10, 10:1-11; Rom 15:4)

CHAPTER: 9 (PART 2)

Chapter eight's theme/title/topic of **Submission To God** provided the perfect follow-up to Jesus' corrective sermons on the Law, holy habits and the gospel (in chapters 5 thru 7) since this (submission to God) is the key to applying and accomplishing those things. Submission to God is also what produces ministers and ministry appointed by God. However, the actions of such ministry can look strange (even wrong!) to the (biblically) untrained eye. This was the case with Jesus. Though clearly a minister appointed by God, His actions (in this chapter) are repeatedly questioned or condemned (9:3, 11, 14, 24, 34). It is for this reason then, that Matthew records the events and teachings of chapter 9: to help us identify these rarely recognized and often questioned actions thru the ministry of Jesus.

The Rarely Recognized (And Often Questioned) Actions Of Ministers And Ministries Appointed By God

1. Claiming The Authority To Forgive Sins (1-8).

As a means of demonstrating Himself to be a minister appointed by God, Jesus' claims the very unpopular position of possessing the authority to forgive sin. This same authority has now been given to those churches (and her leaders) established by Christ (Joh 20:21-23; Mat 18:15-20). What then identifies churches (ministers/ministry) appointed by God/est'd by Christ is the practice of the sacraments (Baptism/LT) and church discipline/restoration as the means to extending forgiveness and binding/loosing sin.

The consequence associated w/churches who deny such authority yet practice discipline = Abuse of their flocks.

2. Spending Large Amounts Of Time W/Those Covenant People Most In Need Of Discipline and Discipleship (9-13).

Though likewise challenged/questioned by the existing religious establishment, Jesus demonstrates this to be the actions of a minister (and ministry) appointed by God. What then also identifies churches (ministers/ministry) appointed by God/est'd by Christ is spending lots of time w/those in the covenant community who are constantly "sick" or struggling w/their sin and seeking the help of those trained as "spiritual doctors" to disciple/discipline them to recovery – to becoming the kinds of consistent righteous practicing people who know the abundant blessings associated w/God mercy (Col 1:28-29; 2Ti 2:24-26, 4:2; 1Th 5:14; Jam 5:19-20). Those equipped to be "spiritual doctors" = Bible-saturated, Law-abiding, Gospel-getting, God-loving, Christ-following, Spirit-filled pastors (not psycho-babble filled therapists).

The consequence associated w/churches who don't have such pastors and (therefore) don't/can't spend time helping such people = God's (eventual) judgment against the entire church (e.g. the message of the prophets = all in the covenant community need to be just or judgment is coming against all [no mercy for anybody]).

3. Changing When The Situation/Circumstances And Scripture Require It (14-17).

Jesus understood that different situations/circumstances could (per God's Word) require different action or behavior. Therefore, as a minister appointed – and in full submission to God, Jesus made the necessary changes when such situations/circumstances occurred – even though it was (at times) questioned by God's people. Churches (ministers/ministry) therefore appointed by God/est'd by Christ will follow suit by changing when the situation/circumstance and God's Word require it. IOW: they will not allow tradition or preference to determine the path they follow no matter how entrenched or comfortable they have become.

The consequence associated w/churches who refuse to change when God's Word requires it = They cease to be disciples of Jesus (disciple = learner = growing and changing).

4. Casting Out Demons (32-34).

Though condemned, Jesus' actions as a minister appointed by God included the exorcising of demons. Churches (ministers/ministry) appointed by God will likewise cast out demons (b/c they are still roaming the earth and oppressing/possessing people!). How they will accomplish this w/b the same as Jesus, thru the incredible power of the *sound* gospel message (v35; Rom 1:16 = what makes the gospel powerful/effectual is the message – not the messenger).

What this looks like = Requiring people to repent and submit their lives to Christ (the king) thru full obedience to God's Laws as the means to gaining/maintaining a place in His kingdom and receiving its blessings/salvation (Christ, Covenant, Church! – Mat 4:17).

The consequence associated w/churches who do not preach the sound/effectual gospel = Their churches are filled w/demons (demon-possessed members)(e.g. Mar 1:21-24; False gospels = false converts – even those possessed by demons – Rev 18:1-2).

5. Helping – Or Delivering From Personal Suffering Only Those Who Demonstrate Trust In Their Ministers And Are Members Of The Covenant Community.

Unlike the (so-called) Christian ministers/ministries today, Jesus was only willing to help those who trusted Him and were a part of the covenant community. Matthew establishes this important truth by way of three miraculous healings: the ruler's daughter, the hemorrhaging woman and the two blind men.

As it re: to ruler's daughter: (18-19, 23-26) = By the time Jesus arrived at the "ruler's house", "flute players and the crowd" are already "making a commotion (i.e. loudly crying)." Jewish tradition taught these professional mourners and musicians were to be the first to arrive after a loved one was pronounced dead – as was the case with the ruler's "daughter" (Jer 9:17-18). Hence the reason Jesus' contrary diagnosis ("she is not dead but sleeping") is met w/mockery by "the crowd" ("they laughed at him"). It is for this reason also that Jesus puts them "outside" (see Mar 5:40 – "he put them all outside"). He did not tolerate those who did not trust His ministry – or Him as God's appointed minister. Such was not true however w/the "ruler". He *did* trust Jesus – even after the news of his daughter (as dead). As a result of such trust, Jesus delivers his daughter from her suffering. The same was true as it re: to the woman suffering w/"a discharge of blood": (20) = The fact that Matthew tells us she "had suffered... for twelve years" implies the bleeding was not her only personal misery.

Her chronic menstrual bleeding¹ meant that she was living in a perpetually unclean state (Lev 15:25ff), something that would have prohibited intimacy w/a spouse and therefore kept her from marriage – or caused it to end in divorce (Deu 24:1 “if he has found some indecency/uncleanness in her...[he may write] her a certificate of divorce”). In addition, Mark tells us that she “had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.” (Mar 5:26). Most people in her shoes would have already given up - yet, she decides to trust Jesus. She (too) decides to put faith in His ministry – or ability as God’s appointed minister to help her situation (**21- “If I only touch His garment, I will be made well”**). And like the previous account, it works. She is healed by Jesus. That His help required her faith (or trust) is made apparent by Jesus’ words in (**22**). The last example of such trust is as it re: to **“two blind men”**: (**27**) = Notice they refer to Jesus as the **“Son of David”**. As discussed in the past, this is a very pregnant term acknowledging far more than simply Jesus’ family tree. It is the title used to identify the Christ (Jer 33:15; Eze 37:24). Their pleas for mercy in the form of miraculous healing (**“have mercy on us”** = heal our blindness) also represent a recognition of Jesus’ Messiahship since prophecy predicted this would distinguish Messiah’s earthly ministry (Isa 61:1 – Fn = “the opening of the eyes to those who are blind”; Isa 35:5-6²). Jesus Himself was fully aware of this distinguishing mark and announced its arrival at the beginning of His public ministry (Luk 4:16-21). One therefore could make the argument that every miraculous healing Jesus performed was for this reason (to prove Him as Messiah). This includes those miracles previously discussed - i.e. the ruler’s daughter and the hemorrhaging woman (Isa 26:19³; Zec 13:1). That being said, there is more to these accounts than further bolstering of Jesus’ as Messiah/Christ. There is as (already mentioned) the common thread of faith/trust as the necessary requirement to receiving Jesus’ help. And it is no different in respect to the two blind men (**28-30a**) = Only after the two men proclaim their trust in Jesus does He help them. The requirements for helping them however doesn’t stop at faith. As w/the previous accounts, the two men are members of the covenant community (i.e. Jews). Help was reserved for God’s elect – or the covenant community (Mat 15:24)⁴. This (then) is the basis of Jesus’ stern warning (**30b-31**) = B/C Jesus’ focus was God’s people, the last thing He wanted was the world hearing about His miraculous abilities since He knew what that would mean – the very thing the loose lips of these men caused (**“His fame...spread...through all the district”** = People beyond the covenant community seeking His help).

The Point (then) Not To Miss (from these three accounts) = Receiving help or deliverance from personal suffering requires not faith (or trust) in the general sense of trusting in God – but more specifically, trust in God’s appointed ministers. This is true not only in relation to Jesus, but all those ministers/ministries appointed by God. To receive their help (or the help of those churches/ministries) where they minister, requires trust in them and those ministries – not in regard to them performing the miraculous (remember this was unique to Jesus and His times as a sign of His messiahship), but rather to receiving their effectual prayer and the community’s resources (Jam 5:14 w/16-18; Act 4:34). And like Jesus, the only ones they should be focused on helping – or delivering from personal suffering, are those who are a part of the covenant community/church (Mat 10:5-6).

What it looks like to demonstrate trust in the church and her ministers = You possess a teachable heart – i.e. you obey the instruction given by your pastors (Mar 6:1-6 – “they took offense at Him” [they were unteachable, 1-3] = “unbelief” [6] = No help b/c they refused to be teachable; Heb 13:17; e.g. 2Th 3:6-15).

Regarding the miraculous healing today: What about Pentecost and the miracles that follow Jesus’ ascension back to heaven? = Though Messiah was gone, messianic times (or time for the miraculous) needed to continue until He and such times could be canonized (recorded as Scripture). Like the prior prophets, writing (or approving certain writings as) Scripture requires accompanying signs (as validation of such ministry). Since writing was not taking place at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, messianic/miraculous times needed to continue until it did –and was complete. Once complete, miracles of this kind ceased – just like they did in the days of the OT prophets (1Co 13:8-13).

Does this mean God doesn’t miraculously heal today? = No (see again Jam 5:16-18). It does however mean that such power no longer resides in an individual – like it did before. Hence the reason Jesus and the apostles can touch or be touched and people are healed. To claim such ability today is therefore a sure sign of a false prophet – those empowered by Satan for the purpose of damning those who seek them (2Th 2:9-12).

¹ Mk 5:29 uses the phrase, “flow of blood” to describe the woman’s problem - which in the scriptures almost exclusively refers to menstrual bleeding when in reference to women.

² Jesus’ healing of the mute demoniac in vv32-34 therefore also serves as a sign to the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy regarding Messianic times.

³ As passage combining Isa 35 and 61 in the Dead Sea Scroll also speaks to Messiah raising the dead. It may also be the one Jesus is alluding to in His response to John’s disciples in (Mat 11:5), “the heavens and the earth will listen to His Messiah, and none therein will stray from the commandments of the holy ones. Seekers of the Lord, strengthen yourselves in His service! All you hopeful in (your) heart, will you not find the Lord in this? For the Lord will consider the pious and call the righteous by name. Over the poor His spirit will hover and will renew the faithful with His power. And he will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal kingdom. He who liberates the captives. restores sight to the blind, straightens the bent, and forever I will cleave to the hopeful and in His mercy...and the fruit...will not be delayed for anyone. And the Lord will accomplish glorious things which have never been as...For He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor...He will lead the uprooted and make the hungry rich...” (A Messianic Apocalypse, 4Q521) “the heavens and the earth will listen to His Messiah, and none therein will stray from the commandments of the holy ones. Seekers of the Lord, strengthen yourselves in His service! All you hopeful in (your) heart, will you not find the Lord in this? For the Lord will consider the pious and call the righteous by name. Over the poor His spirit will hover and will renew the faithful with His power. And he will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal kingdom. He who liberates the captives. restores sight to the blind, straightens the bent, and forever I will cleave to the hopeful and in His mercy...and the fruit...will not be delayed for anyone. And the Lord will accomplish glorious things which have never been as...For He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor...He will lead the uprooted and make the hungry rich...” (A Messianic Apocalypse, 4Q521).

⁴ Exceptions were rare (e.g. Mat 8:5-11, 15:22-28).