

“Get Up and Walk!” Faith and Healing



SABBATH—APRIL 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Matthew 8; Leviticus 13:44–50; Daniel 7:7, 8; John 10:10; Matthew 9:1–8; 1 John 1:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise and walk”?’ ” (Matthew 9:5, NKJV).

WHAT WOULD A LIST OF WHAT YOU FEARED THE MOST LOOK LIKE? For many, the list would include a family member dying, or even dying ourselves. We understand these fears. Is death what we should fear the most?

Suppose God were to make a list of what He fears happening the most. This probably would be the loss of either our family’s eternal life or our own.

Yes, God cares about physical illness and death. But most of all He cares about spiritual illness and eternal death. Jesus healed people and brought the dead back to life. But such new life was only temporary. Sooner or later, all these people except for the saints that left their graves at Jesus’ resurrection¹ died a physical death. (Read Matthew 27:50–53; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, page 550; and Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 786.)

See what God has done for us? But the plan of salvation does not always protect us from earthly sickness and earthly death. With this in mind, let us think about several stories of healing, both physical and spiritual. What important lessons about faith can we learn from them?

DEFINITIONS

1. resurrection—return to life from the dead.

TOUCHING THE UNTOUCHABLE² (Matthew 8:1–4)

Jesus healed the leper with a touch, showing He can heal us from the leprosy of sin.

DEFINITIONS

2. untouchable—a person who is ignored or shunned by society or a particular group.

Jesus had finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount. He then re-entered the kingdom of Satan, a cold dark place filled with decaying people, crying to be saved from sin and suffering. At that time, leprosy was one of the most powerful examples of just how terrible Satan's kingdom had become. God had used leprosy as a form of punishment in the past, as Miriam's case shows (read Numbers 12:9–12). According to the Bible, leprosy is a shocking and frightening example of what it means to live in a fallen and broken world.

Read Matthew 8:1–4. How important is the fact that Jesus touched this leper while healing him? (Read, for example, Leviticus 13:44–50.)

The leper kneels before Jesus and says, “If You are willing, You can make me clean” (Matthew 8:2, NKJV). The Greek word for “can” is *dunamai*, like “dynamite” in English. It means full of power. “If you are willing, you are full of power and can change my life.” Jesus says He is willing to heal the leper, and right away He does just that.

The fact that Jesus touched the leper must have impressed the crowds who saw what had happened. Surely, as He did on other occasions (such as the next recorded healing), Jesus could have just spoken the word, and the man would be healed. But why did He bother to touch him?

“The work of Christ in cleansing the leper from his terrible disease is an example of His work in cleansing the soul from sin. The man who came to Jesus was ‘full of leprosy.’ Its deadly poison filled his whole body. The disciples tried to prevent their Master from touching him. This is because he who touched a leper became unclean himself. But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus did not become unclean. His touch sent life-giving power into the leper.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 266.

Perhaps, by touching the leper, Jesus showed that no matter how bad our sin is, He will bring Himself close to those who are willing to be forgiven, healed, and cleansed from it.

Do you know someone who is suffering from something we see today as “leprosy”? It may be anything that makes other people pull back in horror and judgment. How can the example of Jesus help you to understand how to relate to that person?

**THE ROMAN AND THE MESSIAH (THE CHOSEN ONE)
(Matthew 8:5–13)**

There is a good reason the book of Daniel spends a lot of time dealing with Rome (read Daniel 7:7, 8, 19–21; Daniel 8:9–12, 23–25). And that is because of its great power. During the time of Christ, a Roman officer was a symbol of the power of Rome. But one such Roman officer, known as a centurion, comes to Jesus. This centurion is helpless in the face of the common troubles and suffering that bother us all. What a lesson about the limits of what earthly powers can do! The greatest and most influential leaders, the richest men and women, stand helpless against many of the common struggles of life. Truly, without God’s help, what hope do any of us have?

Read Matthew 8:5–13. What important truths about faith and its meaning are shown in this story? What should this story say to us, as Seventh-day Adventists, a people who have been given special advantages?

A centurion was a Roman military officer who had 80 to 100 soldiers under him. Serving in the army for about twenty years, he was not permitted to have a legal family. So, the centurion’s servant might have been his only real family.

In that culture, the Romans were hated people. The only person more hated than a Roman would have been a leper. So, this officer perhaps guessed that Jesus would not want to enter his home, even though Jesus says that He would. By asking just for the Word of Jesus, the centurion shows great faith that speaks to us today: Jesus’ word is as powerful as His touch. This centurion did not think it too hard for Jesus to heal his servant. The centurion believed that Jesus could order the sickness to leave his servant in the same way that a military officer gives orders to a soldier. Officers give orders to soldiers all the time.

Also, look at what Jesus says in Matthew 8:11, 12. What a stern warning to those who have been given special advantages. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been given special advantages and should take notice of this warning.

What daily practices and choices do you make? More important, how do these choices influence your faith? What can you do to make choices that will cause your faith to grow?



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DEMONS AND PIGS (Matthew 8:25–34)



The legion of demons asked to be sent into the herd of 2,000 pigs.



All that Satan tries to do in our lives Jesus can and will undo. He did this for the two demon-possessed men. And He will do it for you.

Read Matthew 8:25–34. What do both stories teach us about the power of God? How can we receive comfort from His power, especially as we struggle with things so much greater than ourselves?

In Jewish thought it was the right of God alone to rule over nature and demons. In Matthew 8:23–27, we read how Jesus calms a terrible storm with simple words. Jesus steps onto the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, in Gentile (non-Jewish) territory where some demon-possessed men live.

Mark 5:1–20 and Luke 8:26–39 add more facts to the story of the demon-possessed men. The demons call themselves “legion.” A legion in the military was 6,000 soldiers. The demons were sent into about 2,000 pigs (Mark 5:13).

Many have wondered why the demons asked to be sent into the pigs. One story taught that the demons most hated empty wandering. They would rather have a home of some type, even if it was an unclean pig. Another story taught that demons were afraid of the water. Jesus Himself even makes references to demons walking through waterless places looking for rest (see Matthew 12:43, RSV). There were also Jewish stories that taught that demons could be destroyed before the final closing day of the Lord.

Whatever the reason may be, the most important point is this: the destructive condition of the demon-possessed men in this story is exactly the destructive condition that Satan wants for God’s children. But Jesus completely changed their lives. All that Satan tries to do in our lives Jesus can and will undo for those who choose to give themselves to Christ. Otherwise we are helpless against Satan.

We are either on one side or the other in the great war between Christ and Satan. Jesus could not have spoken this truth more clearly than He did when He said: “ ‘He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather [work to bring others to God] with Me scatters’ ” (Luke 11:23, NKJV). Which side we are on depends upon us.

Read John 10:10. “ ‘The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly [plentifully]’ ” (NKJV). What does this mean to the demons and to ourselves for our lives? In what ways can and should we experience what we are promised here?

“GET UP AND WALK!” (Matthew 9:1–8)

In Monday’s study, we noted that Jesus said He had not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. But during these same hours in Israel, there was a man who had reached a place where his desire for healing of the heart was even greater than for healing of his body.

Read Matthew 9:1–8. What great hope should we take from these verses for ourselves about the promise of forgiveness for our sins? Why does it not matter what those sins have been or the damage that they have done? Read also Romans 4:7; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:12.

How interesting that the first thing Jesus does for the paralytic³ is to treat his spiritual condition. Clearly, Jesus knows exactly what the real problem is. The man suffers deeply. He is in a terrible physical condition. But Christ knows that the deeper problem is the man’s guilt over his very sinful life. Jesus also knows of the man’s desire for forgiveness. So, He speaks what would have to be the greatest and most comforting words for anyone who understands the real cost of sin: “Your sins are forgiven you.”

Ellen G. White adds: “[The paralytic] desired relief from the burden of sin more than he desired a cure for his physical condition. If only he could see Jesus and receive the promise of forgiveness and peace with Heaven! He would then be satisfied to live or die, according to God’s will.” —Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 267.

So often our prayers are about our physical needs. And God does care about these things. But in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says we are to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” So, in the end, whatever our physical needs are, it is more important that we keep eternal things first in our minds in a world where so much lasts only a short time and is soon gone.

Whatever our physical struggles are, they will only last for a short time on this earth. Why is it so important that we never forget this truth?

DEFINITIONS

3. paralytic—a person who is unable to move or feel all or part of his or her body.

LETTING THE DEAD BURY THE DEAD (Matthew 8:18–22)

Read Matthew 8:18–22. What is Jesus saying to these men about what it means to follow Him?

First, in Matthew 8:18–22, we see two men reach out to Jesus, wanting to become His disciples. Both are sincere. But both seem to be held back by something. Jesus, who knows all our thoughts, goes straight to the heart of the matter. He questions whether the first man is really willing to give up everything—including his own bed—to follow Him. This does not mean that a person will lose all his earthly things if he or she follows Jesus. It simply means that a person needs to be ready to do so.

Jesus then answers the second man, “ ‘Follow Me, and leave the dead [in sin] to bury their own dead’ ” (Matthew 8:22, Amplified Bible). At first, Jesus’ words to this man might seem rough. What the man wanted to do seemed reasonable: “ ‘Lord, let me first go and bury [care for till death] my father’ ” (Matthew 8:21, Amplified Bible). Why could he not do that first and then follow Jesus after that? In the Jewish faith it was considered part of obeying the fifth commandment to ensure that one’s parents were properly buried.

However, some Bible interpreters argue that the man’s father was not yet dead, or even at the point of death. Instead, the man was just saying to Jesus, *Let me get everything with my family all worked out, and then I will follow You.* Jesus’ words showed this man that he was really just making an excuse to put off following Jesus.

So, with that in mind, Jesus’ words to the second man to put Him first do not seem so “rough” after all.

Another call to discipleship⁴ is found in Matthew 9:9–13, with the call to Matthew. Matthew was a hated tax collector. Jesus knew the man’s heart, which was clearly open to truth, as his answer to Jesus’ call shows. Jesus surely knew what answer Matthew would make. And the Bible verses prove this to be true. To us today it is hard to see just how upsetting the call to Matthew would be to the people back then. But this call is another example of just how worldwide the call of the gospel really is.

Read Matthew 9:13. How does the principle in this verse have meaning for us today? How can we be careful that we do not let religious beliefs or practices, no matter how right, get in the way of doing what really is important to God?

DEFINITIONS

4. discipleship—the process of accepting the call to follow Jesus as His believer and calling others to follow Him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘Thou Canst Make Me Clean,’ ” pages 262–271, in *The Desire of Ages*.

In Thursday’s study, we read about the man who wanted first to bury his father and then to be a disciple of Jesus. But Jesus said, “ ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead’ ” (Matthew 8:22, NKJV). What did Jesus mean by suggesting that the man—a living man—was dead? The Amplified Bible shows dead means “dead [in sin].” In other words, those who are dead in sin are living for this world and its pleasures with no hope or desire for eternal life. But Jesus wanted to point the man and us to something greater than what this world offers. No wonder, then, that Jesus said what He did.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① With the idea presented above in mind, go back and read the story in Matthew in which Jesus says what He does to the man about burying his father. What should this tell us about how important it is to keep the big picture in mind with all that we do? How does our study of the Bible help us to understand just how big the picture really is?

② When we pray for the sick, we do not always know God’s will (plan) for physical healing. But we do always know His will for spiritual healing. In what way should this influence your prayer life?

③ What are the things that are most important to you? Make a list and bring that list to class. What can you learn from your lists? What do they teach us about ourselves and about our view of the world, of God, and of one another? How different would the list be if a group of atheists⁵ wrote it?

DEFINITIONS

5. atheists—people who believe that there is no God.