

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

68- Jesus Demonstrates His Absolute Authority- Part 6
Is the Absolute Authority of Jesus
Available Today? Part 2

Church September 03, 2023

Matthew 8:1-17

1 When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.

2 And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

3 Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him,

6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."

7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

10 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.

11 "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;

12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.

14 When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever.

15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him.

16 When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill.

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

About 500 years before Jesus was born- a Greek Poet (Aeschylus¹) wrote this,

He who learns must suffer
And even in our Sleep
Pain, which cannot forget
Falls drop by drop upon the Heart
Until in our own Despair
Against our Will
Comes Wisdom to us
Through the awful Grace of God

... and what this man was trying to say was that God's Grace brings us Wisdom- but it does so- many times, *against* our Will; and *through* our Despair. And that would mean at last two things:

1. We do NOT have the decisive Control over our Lives- God does. And so, the human "Will"; and the "sanctity" of the "*Freedom of our Will*"- is way over-blown and is a Hindrance to understand God and His Ways properly and fully
2. Despair and the Problems that bring Despair into our Lives is NOT always a bad Thing- *especially* when dealing with eternal or spiritual Attributes

... and this is a timeless Truth that applies to all Mankind for all Ages.

And that is why God the Holy Spirit "moved" on the unknown writer to say this in **Hebrews 12:3**

¹ 525-456 BC.

For consider Him [Jesus] who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Now even though what Aeschylus wrote is true- it wasn't Inspired. But what this writer wrote- *is*. So, as Believers, in order to make sense of our Despair; to try to understand why a Good God allows His own Children to suffer- sometimes *horrifically*- seemingly *unfairly*- this writer infallibly instructs us to, "*Consider Jesus*".

And when we do- when we ponder; or meditate; or think deeply about Jesus- this inerrant Instruction says we will focus on the part of Jesus' earthly Life and we will see a fully human Man,

... who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself ...

So, we must think that even though Jesus was truly and fully Human- He was also truly and fully Deity. And as God- Jesus NEVER sinned. So, Jesus was sinlessly Perfect; sinlessly Pure; sinlessly undefiled; sinlessly Righteous; sinlessly Glorious. And yet, as truly and fully Man- this sinless Jesus was also right here- living on this Sin-cursed earth with us- looking at Evil; and Sin; and Injustice; and Wickedness- that was being carried out- all around Him- all the time.

And I'm not talking about the Cross right now. I'm talking about what Jesus saw and what He looked at every day, like: The enslavement and abuse of Children; Women treated like cattle; Poor and crippled and blind and starving people- stumbling aimlessly up and down the dirt roads- that were littered with dead bodies; Leper colonies- that held as many as 10,000 hopeless people- whose flesh was literally rotting away.

And then there were the Roman soldiers. Occupiers. Gentile dogs. Pagans. Carpetbaggers. Standing guard; Marching up and down the streets of the "*City of David*"; the "*Habitation of Peace*" (Jerusalem). Arresting; abusing; and mocking God's chosen people.

But *worst* of all; *worse* than the Lepers; *worse* than the pagan Romans; *worse* than Slavery; *worse* than all the physical Abuse and the Poverty; and the Injustice; and the Death- for 33-1/2 years BEFORE He screamed in Agony on the Cross- Jesus saw the religious Frauds that *dominated* the very Core of the Jew- the very Center of the "Being" of what it meant to be "*chosen by God*".

Jesus saw the men, who, "**have seated themselves in the Chair of Moses**" (**Matthew 23:2**)- teaching the people what God supposedly said. But it WASN'T what Moses said. It WASN'T what God had said. So, they were *deceiving* the people. Lying to them. Leading them astray. Leading them into Hell. Because

“Judaism” was then and is today- a completely fabricated and Man-made “doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1)- that *cannot* forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul.

And these men *hated* Jesus. The very men, who were supposedly the closest to God- literally despised God in human Flesh. They seethed in their Anger toward our Lord- insulting Him; and always trying to trap Him into saying something that they could use against Him.

When the Lips of the Christ spoke- instead of falling on their faces and repenting- these men only grew in their absolute and total Rejection of the ONLY sinless Man who ever lived.

This is the “**Hostility by Sinners against Himself**” that Jesus endured; and that the writer of **Hebrews** was talking about. But WHY did this writer want all of us to ponder and think and meditate on this- this uncomfortable mistreatment of our Lord?

... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart

... but why would we “**grow weary**”? Why would we “**lose heart**”?

We live in the *greatest*; and most *powerful*; and *richest*; and *freest* Nation in the History of the world. MOST people in this Country have almost unlimited Opportunity to do just about anything we choose to do. So, what could possibly go on in our Lives that would make us “*grow weary*” and “*lose heart*”?

Well, according to all the Statistics- it is the Issue of “Suffering”. But NOT in the way that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the peoples of the world suffer. You see, contrary to what the rest of the world thinks- Americans suffer. Yes, we do! But we suffer quite *differently* than others who do NOT have the Power; or the Wealth; or the Freedoms that we have. Yet God has “*seen to it*” that with all that we have- we- His people; God’s chosen people- absolutely DO suffer. And I have two Questions about that:

1. How could that be?
2. Why is that?

Suffering exists- even for the most wealthy and free people on earth- because it is God’s Will that we suffer. It is God’s Will that we all- all of us saved folk- taste of Suffering. Why? Because as the Poet said,

Pain, which cannot forget
Falls drop by drop upon the Heart
Until in our own Despair

Against our Will
Comes Wisdom
Through the awful Grace of God

.. or as the writer *infallibly* said in **Hebrews 12:10b&11:**

... He [God] disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Did you see that? God says He disciplines us- He allows Suffering to touch our Lives- SO THAT...

... we may share His holiness!

... but exactly how does that work? In what way does Suffering cause us to share in God's Holiness? This writer said,

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

So, PART of why we suffer is so that we may be "**trained by it**". So, that we may be "**trained**" by and through and in our Suffering- which we now know- is God's Discipline.

Now the word that was translated here into English as "**trained**" comes from a Greek word (*gumnazoo*; Strong's #1128)- which means: *to exercise naked; to exercise vigorously either the body or the mind.*

So, we are trained- we are *nakedly* exercised- without any way to cover up our Weaknesses; without the ability to mask our Pain; without the ability to hide our Hurt- we are "trained"; we are "transformed"; we are "changed"; we are "made better"; we are "made more spiritually healthy"- in, by, and through our Suffering. So, God works us- He leads us- forward- toward Himself- because even though we usually don't know this- the single greatest Need that we have- is to be close to God!

The ancient Greek Poet called it, the

"awful Grace of God"

... where the word, “awful” means: “*powerful and effective*” and NOT “bad”.

But in the inerrant and infallible Words of sacred Scripture- this “*awful Grace of God*” that operates contrary to our Will- is called,

“Sanctification” (Hebrews 12:14)

... and we, as Believers, are to not only “pursue” this Sanctification- but we are to be “exercised” or “trained” or “changed” or “transformed” by it.

But we are cautioned to NOT be “destroyed” by it; or to turn *against* God because of it. **Hebrews 12:14-17** says,

14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

16 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

“*Sanctification*” is a part of our Salvation. It is a very important Part of the overall “*Process of Salvation*” that began in “*Eternity Past*” with the one single “*Decree of God*” and extends all the way out into “*Eternity Future*” when our saved and redeemed souls are united with a glorified Body. And there are, at least, 15 separate Parts of this Salvation²- with Sanctification coming just after the already born again and justified soul is adopted into the Family of God. In fact, Sanctification is the Part that usually takes up the *majority* of our Lives- unless we are born again on our “Death Bed”.

So, in Context with what we have been studying these last few weeks- as the Apostle Matthew is careful to present us with three amazing Displays of the absolute Authority of God- in the Life of Jesus- I have asked several Questions:

1. What is God’s Absolute Authority?
2. Did these supernatural Events really happen?
3. Why did Jesus demonstrate His Authority?
4. Is this Authority active today?

² You may wish to avail yourselves of the Teaching on the “*Ordo Salutis*” (the Order of Salvation) that Pastor Blair taught some years ago.

... and we have gone over three of these in great detail and touched on #4 last week. So, today- I want to tie in what we know to be true about Sanctification with the 4th Question:

4. Is this Absolute Authority Active Today?

And the “short Answer” is divided into two Parts:

1. If by “**Active Today**” you mean, does God perform Miracles today- then my Answer is, “*Yes!*” God is a supernatural Being Who has absolute Authority over everything He has made. And He can perform Miracles anytime He chooses
2. If by “**Active Today**” you mean does God desire to go forth into the earth and heal the sick; raise the dead and cast out devils like Jesus did in the 1st Century- then my Answer is, “*No!*”

... and please allow me to explain my Answer by going through each one.

Yes! This Absolute Authority is Active Today

Almighty God can basically do whatever He *desires* to do. Which is what it means for God to be “Sovereign”. So, from that Perspective- Yes! God, in His Wisdom, Might, and Mercy- can and He sometimes does perform Miracles. That is God’s “Prerogative”. God is Good and He is Merciful and He is Almighty. Now God will NEVER do anything that goes against His own pristine Nature. So, God CANNOT lie; He CANNOT be Evil in any way.

But God is always in Command of all that He made. And so, at any time- in accord with His Will- God can temporarily *suspend* the Laws of Physics and Nature in order to accomplish His Goals. So, God can miraculously heal today the very SAME WAY He did in the Bible.

No! This Absolute Authority is NOT Active Today

But the “*Absolute Authority*” that Jesus demonstrated here in the first 17 verses of **Matthew 8** is NOT Active; and it is NOT carried out IN THE SAME WAY OR FOR THE SAME REASON- as it operated back in the 1st Century. So, any Time God moves supernaturally today- it is NOT for the Same reason He moved that way in the Bible.

As we discovered last time- the Reason or the Purpose behind WHY Jesus healed the sick and cast out Devils- was NOT to banish either sickness or satan

from the earth. That is NOT why Jesus healed people. The Bible tells us why Jesus performed Miracles in **Hebrews 2:1-4**:

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,

3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

The Bible clearly teaches here that Miracles; and Signs and Wonders; and Gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested through Jesus and the Apostles and Disciples because God Almighty was “*testifying*” to the world that this “great Salvation” that was brought about through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus was “*from*” God and “*of*” God.

In other words, the Purpose of Miracles; Signs and Wonders; a spiritual Gifts was to give “*Divine Credibility*” to the radical Teaching of Jesus and His Apostles. Another Way to look at it is that all these supernatural Manifestations were made visible to show or to demonstrate the “*Veracity*”; the “*Truthfulness*”; and the “*Trustworthiness*” of the New Covenant- that has *forever* replaced the Old.

But once that “*Divine Credibility*” had been received- the “*Age of Miracles; Signs and Wonders; and many of the Gifts*³” were no longer needed. And that is NOT because God somehow lost His Power or changed His Mind; or that the Bible isn’t true. It is because those supernatural Manifestations had done their job; they had accomplished the Mission they were sent to do- because they *forced* the world to know that Jesus is God Almighty in human Flesh!

Now there are many, many people in the modern Church who don’t believe what I just said. And they will quote a couple of verses (that are taken completely out of Context) to try to prove their Point. One of the most common is found in **Hebrews 13:8** that says,

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

³ Those Gifts that helped to establish the Church and Christianity on the earth have faded away- NOT because God changed- but because those Gifts succeeded. Those Gifts are the “Revelatory and Sign Gifts”. The Church of Jesus IS now firmly established on the earth. So, we no longer need those Gifts that helped to establish it. What we need today are those Gifts that will help to propagate the Gospel and to “see to it” that the Gospel triumphs over the Nations of the world.

Now this verse is in the Bible to discuss the “*Immutability*” of Jesus- *in His Being*. So, this illustrates the Fact that, like as God, Jesus NEVER changes. So, this verse is very *narrowly* showing us the “*Immutability*” of Jesus.

Yet when some read this verse- they then add to what it says, and they come to the *wrong* Conclusion that “*What Jesus did- He will always do*”- meaning that since Jesus performed Miracles and healed sick bodies and cast out demons back in the 1st Century- then He will do that today.

But that isn’t what this verse says. It is true that God NEVER changes. That is a Fact about the Nature and the Character of Almighty God. So, since God NEVER changes- we can trust Who He is and we can trust What He has spoken. So, since God NEVER changes- God’s Word NEVER changes. And since Jesus is truly and fully God- Jesus NEVER changes.

But the Way that God deals with Man DOES change. And the Way that God moves in the earth DOES change. It has changed *many* times over the Centuries. For example, when God first spoke to a human- He spoke to Adam. And God instructed Adam what His Will was concerning he and Eve; and how they were to live in the Garden that God had made.

But Adam sinned. And with him- the entire human Race entered into a “*State of Being*” called, “*Fallen*”. And because Mankind was now “*Fallen*”- we no longer live in the Garden. So, God then began to deal with people *differently* than He did *before* Adam sinned. But according to the Bible- the next person God spoke to- was Cain (**Genesis 4:6**). And God spoke to him in Judgment!

The next person God spoke to was Noah (**Genesis 6:13**). And God told Noah to specifically build an Ark and prepare for a terrible Flood. After that- God spoke to Abram. Yet with him- God spoke more often and in greater Detail than He had before. And on and on it went all through the early Years of Man. And each time God made a Way to communicate with Man- it was less vague; less general; it was done more often; and in greater and greater Detail.

So, as God began to gather His people together- He spoke to Moses- but He began to use other “*Means*” as well. So, God began to communicate with His people through the “*Urim and Thummim*” (**Exodus 28:30**)⁴. Then God spoke to His people through “*Seers*” (**2Chronicles 33:18**). And, finally, God used “*Prophets*” (**Numbers 12:6**). And this is what the unknown writer meant in **Hebrews 1:1** when he said,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

⁴ These mysterious Elements were rocks or jewels worn by the High Priest and attached to the Ephod. When a Question was asked- these Elements either shone a Light or glowed in some Way to determine a “yes” or a “no”.

... yet each “**Portion**” and each “**Way**” was more and more *precise* and more and more *detailed*. And that is why theologians tell us that “*Divine Revelation*” is “*Progressive*”. The Way God speaks to Man started out very general and very vague. But as time when on- “*Divine Revelation*” became more clear and more precise- which is why in the next verse this same writer said,

in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (Hebrews 1:2)

... so, the very Pinnacle of “*Divine Revelation*” is Jesus; WHO He is; WHAT He said; and WHAT He did. So, once Jesus revealed the Father to Man- there was no more Need for either an *inferior* Revelation; or an *inferior* “Means” that brought that *inferior* Revelation.

Why would anyone want to hear from two rocks; or a Seer; or even a Prophet- if we could hear from the incarnate God Himself? The two rocks could ONLY answer, “*Yes*” or “*No*”. The Seer ONLY had as much information as God had revealed BEFORE even the Old Testament was completed⁵; and every single Prophet who ever lived was a Sinner, who had been saved by Grace. Yet Jesus was the sinless Lamb- Who was God Almighty in human Flesh and Who brought to us the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man through the 27 Books of the New Testament!

The Way God dealt with the Jew in the Old Testament- under the Old Covenant was vastly *different* than the Way that God deals with people today- who are part of Christ’s Church. Back then, God was VERY interested in the one single Nation of Israel- but today- God is interested in saving souls out of every racial, ethnic; and national Group and them becoming part of the one, holy, universal, and apostolic Church!

So, it is true that Jesus NEVER changes and is Immutable. But it is also true that the Way God deals with Mankind absolutely *differs* from one Age to the next.

Another Scripture that people twist to try to say that the Miracles; Signs and Wonders; and Gifts of the Holy Spirit are the SAME as they were back in the 1st Century is found in **Romans 11:29**:

for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

⁵ There is no Record that a “Seer” ever wrote any of the 39 Books of the Old Testament. He also did NOT speak anything contrary to what was already revealed. So, his ability to “see” was limited by the already existing Revelation of God.

Here, people misuse the word, “**Gifts**” to refer to the “*9 spiritual Gifts*” of **1 Corinthians 12&14**- that includes the “**working of Miracles**” (**1 Corinthians 12:10**).

But that isn’t what **Romans 11** is talking about- at all. **Romans 11** is in the Bible as part of a 3-Chapter *parenthesis* around the much larger Discussion of Salvation throughout the entire **Book of Romans**. Paul wrote **Romans 9-11** to explain *why* the people that God chose under the Old Covenant- the Jews- almost *unanimously* rejected Jesus; and how that effects the Doctrine of “*Sovereign Election*”. And **Romans 9-11** tells us several things:

- Sovereign Election is true
- The Word of God has NOT failed
- God will save ALL He chose
- God will keep those He saves- throughout all Eternity
- Jews were chosen by God
- NOT ALL Jews were chosen by God
- ALL the Jews who were chosen will be saved
- Those Jews not chosen will NOT be saved

... which is the SAME Way God works with EVERYBODY!

So, **Roman 11:29** is NOT even about “spiritual Gifts”. It is about the Certainty that God is NOT an “Indian Giver”; and that He does NOT speak with “forked tongue”- so, EVERYBODY God chose for Salvation will be saved- including all of the chosen Jews.

So, the Gifts that God gave the elected Jews (under the Old Covenant) and the sovereign CALL of God on the Lives of the CHOSEN Jews- is Good; and it is still in force under the New Covenant. And so, Paul is telling those who read **Romans 11** that every single Jew that God chose to save from before the Foundation of the world WILL be saved. But that also means that those Jews who were NOT chosen will NOT be saved. But this is the very SAME Way that God saves EVERYBODY!

THAT is what **Romans 11:29** means. It isn’t referring to the continuation of Miracles; Signs and Wonders; and certain Gifts at all. And for people to try to make it apply to those Issues is to twist the Scriptures to try to make them say what they *already* believe anyway. And that is a terrible Sin.

Think of all the destructive and evil things that could suddenly become “sanctified” if we were allowed to take the Scriptures out of Context and twist them to say whatever we wanted! It would bring Chaos to the Church- which is *exactly* what happens everywhere this is done.

Now it is very difficult for most people to understand WHY it would be God's Will for His own people to suffer and to NOT be delivered or healed or blessed. Who doesn't want to be healed when they are sick? Who doesn't want *more* Money and *more* Possessions? Who doesn't want to get out of whatever Trouble they are in? EVERYBODY wants those things- Saved or Lost.

But when we read the Bible- what is revealed to us is a God, who is "Almighty" (Sovereign) and who is "Good". And that's where the Questions come in. "*Why would a Sovereign and Good God NOT get me out of this Trouble I'm in?*" Why would it be God's Will for His people to suffer; and be sick; and to be imprisoned; and to be tortured; and to die by the hands of evil men? What possible Good could come from me just getting beat up all the time? How could a Good God want that?

This is another Place where the Bible and Christianity differs greatly from every other Religion on earth. And it is also where they differ from our own human Nature. Because the Bible teaches that Death is NOT the worst thing that can happen to us. The Bible teaches that sinning against God is infinitely WORSE than not being healed. And the Truth is that Poverty; and being treated unfairly; and having physical or mental handicaps; and NOT having Opportunities- is a *common* thing among the Redeemed.

What is NOT common- is for Christians to be wealthy; and in charge; and always healthy. That is NOT the common Testimony among the Redeemed- either right now around the world; or throughout History. MOST saved people are Poor. MOST saved people are persecuted. MOST saved people are mistreated. MOST saved people are NEVER given Opportunities to advance and prosper. And so, MOST saved people are NOT always healthy. And that is how it has ALWAYS been.

Those things are true- here- in America. And that has more to do with our economic System and our Liberties (which are Acts of God's Providence) than they do with the Supernatural and the Miraculous. MOST people live better Lives in America than almost anywhere else. MOST people who work hard in America- prosper. MOST people in America have Access to better educational and medicinal Utilities than elsewhere. And that is true whether they are saved or Lost. And as a Result- the people of the American Church are mostly prosperous and healthy; and our churches are mostly big and large and prosperous.

Yet we know that not all who sit on the pews of the American church are saved. Yet they prosper and are healthy. And God seems to even *favor* America and its people- over and above other people and other nations.

Yet what God says is still true- even for Americans. And so, the Love of Money is the root of all sorts of Evil. And we CANNOT measure whether a

person is in “Right Standing” with God by looking at the size of his bank account; or the amount of toys he owns. So, good, healthy, bodies are NOT Sign of Salvation. And lots of Money and material Possessions are NOT a Sign that a person loves Jesus. And churches getting involved in “Spiritual Competition” to see how many people we can get wet in Baptism; or how many building projects we can be involved in- is NOT a Sign that the Church is growing in God; or that the people are pursuing Holiness on purpose.

So, what will be the Sign? What is the Mark of genuine Salvation and genuine Love for God? The Bible says it is the ability to live well; and to suffer well; and to die well- all to God’s Glory. The Bible says it is to become like little Children. The Bible says it is to decrease and NOT to increase; and the Bible says it is to be content- genuinely content- with whatever God has chosen to give to us. One of the greatest verses in the entire Bible that illustrates what genuine biblical Christianity looks like more than any other verse is found in **Hebrews 10:34** that says:

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Now look again- very closely at what this writer said was true about those people:

[You] accepted joyfully the seizure of your property...

The personal Property of these people was seized. Illegally; unlawfully; wrongfully; unjustly. It was probably taken from them for no other Reason than that they were Believers in Jesus. So, this is Persecution- real, bad, serious Persecution. They don’t have an animal to carry them anymore. Their children don’t have any clothes to wear. They have no food. And keep in mind they also didn’t have any Insurance to re-imburse them for their loss; no FEMA to write them a check; no Welfare System in place to feed their Children. And there is no reason to think that God moved and miraculously gave them everything back. And since Christianity was an illegal and persecuted Religion back then- the people that stole everything from them were probably not even punished. So, these people- because they were Believers- would probably also not be able to find any Work either- because nobody wanted to hire the “little christs” (*Christians*). This is what it was like to love Jesus back in the 1st Century.

But look at the most important word in this verse: “**JOYFULLY**” They didn’t just have their stuff stolen. And they also didn’t simply ENDURE that

Injustice. The inspired; infallible; and inerrant Word of the living God says that these people...

... accepted joyfully the seizure of your property...

This is incredible! But this was NOT uncommon with the early Believers, either. Because Pain and Misery and Suffering were part and parcel to their Lives- precisely because they had turned from their Sins and had trusted in Jesus! They didn't think that God owed them Healing or Deliverance or Blessings. So, their Response was JOY! JOY! So, I've got two Questions about this:

1. What allowed them to rejoice in the Face of Injustice?
2. How can I become a Christian like that?

The Answer to the first Question is given in this same verse:

... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

These people KNEW- they didn't guess; or hope; or even believe. They KNEW! What did they know? They KNEW they had a BETTER and MORE LASTING Possession in Heaven than ANYTHING they could ever have on this earth! They KNEW that! And because they knew that- they could accept an Atrocity with Joy!

But what allowed them to know that they had a BETTER and MORE LASTING Possession than anything they could have on this earth? Well, that part is not spelled out as clearly or as fast as the other. But knowing the Bible- I would suggest it was because they had developed a biblical "*Theology of Suffering*".

And so, Suffering wasn't some Anomaly to these people; it wasn't some weird thing that never happened. These people ate Suffering for Breakfast. And so, suffering for Jesus; *because of Jesus*- was part of the daily Worship of these people. And unlike us- they *expected* it- because Jesus had *promised* it. And that means that when Jesus didn't heal them; when He chose to allow evil men to have their way; when their loving Savior allowed them to be cast into Prison and to get sick- these Believers didn't fall apart; they didn't give up; and they didn't quit.

These people had discovered that it meant MORE to God that they were Holy than that they were healed. It meant MORE to God that they were tender and caring people than that they were always prosperous. It meant MORE to God than they could forgive their enemies than that they were always Safe.

So, they concentrated on the Things that would bring about Holiness; and Purity of Heart; and Kindness; and they begged God for a Heart that could give; and a Will that was subjected to God's Word and Will- rather than being driven to accomplish their own Ambitions. So, they "availed themselves" of the Means of Grace; and they asked God to bathe them in Love; and for Help to be Merciful rather than have more Possessions.

And the Bible says God answered those Prayers; and those people- who we will never know their names until we get to Glory- actually became the kind of Christians who could accept the seizing of their Property- JOYFULLY- because they KNEW they had a BETTER and a MORE LASTING Possession in Heaven than anything they could ever have down here! And I pray that we can become a people just like that- and that, even against our Will- the "awful Grace of God" will have its Way in our Lives- and we will eagerly seek for the miracle Worker- Jesus Christ- and NOT for the Miracle itself.

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2021-2023 by *Enjoying God Ministries, Inc.* All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

Enjoying God Ministries, Inc. PO Box 147 Saucier, Mississippi 39574 www.covenantofpeace.net
Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of a verse- by- verse "Journey" through the **Gospel of Matthew**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this Transcript without the express written permission of *Enjoying God Ministries, Inc.* and that this complete Copyright Statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

