

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • TV165A

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Matthew 8:1-4

“When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

I am going to be speaking today from the **Book of Matthew**. Our message will be taken from the **8TH chapter of Matthew verses: 1 through 4.**

Here is the subject: **“HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?”** Our text is **Matthew 8: 1 through 4**. Now, let me read the text today from **Matthew chapter 8** beginning with **verse 1**; *“When Christ was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him and, behold, there came a leper.”* Now we know that leprosy in the Scripture is a type of sin; it is used throughout the Scriptures as a type of man’s corruption, defilement, and separation from God, (but a leper met Him).

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

The leper fell down and worshipped him saying, *“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him saying, I will, be thou clean. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”*

Now, my friends; I’m not sure that the number of times that a truth appears in the Scripture, determines its importance. I’m not saying that if something is in the Scripture twice or three times or four times that it is more important than something that is in the Bible one time.

I am saying this, this incident is recorded three times in the New Testament. Matthew recorded it, Mark recorded it and Luke recorded it. So, what I am saying is that this incident in the life of our Lord receives a prominent place in the Word of God.

I would say also, this; that the manner and attitude in which this man approached the Lord is a good example. He had a definite attitude and a definite approach to the Master. He received mercy; he received what he wanted; he received what he needed and he came to the Lord to receive it.

Now, what I am saying is that this man’s attitude and the manner, in which he approached Christ, is a good example for us to follow who seek His grace and who seek His mercy. Whatever my purpose is coming to Christ, (if I need forgiveness, or pardon, if I need justification, if I need to know His will, if I need healing, if I need a revelation of His direction) then I should come to Christ as this man came because his need was met.

This is what we are going to look at. I am going to bring out some vital issues this morning and I want you to listen very carefully to this message. But, before we answer the question, **“how can a sinner obtain mercy,”** I want to make this perfectly clear:

First of all: Let us learn that all blessings are in Christ! They are not to be found in the church; they are not to be found in a creed; they are not to be found in a law, a ritual, or an ordinance; they are to be found in Christ. That is what the Scripture says.

Do you remember the woman who had the issue of blood for 10 or 12 years and had spent all that she had on many physicians and was no better but steadily got worse?

She said this; *“If I can get to Christ, if I can but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made whole.”* That’s what I am saying; this sums up what I am declaring. If I can get to Christ, if I can lay hold on Christ, if I can obtain a personal union with Christ then I can have the blessings that God has for sinners because all of God’s blessings are in Christ.

Listen to the Scripture in **Colossians 2:3**: *“In him are hid all the treasures of God in Christ;”* that’s where they are. All the treasures of God are in Christ.

Listen to **Ephesians 1:3**: All spiritual blessings are in Christ. *“God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.”*

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Listen to **Colossians 1:19**: *“It pleased God that in him should all fullness dwell.”*

In **1 Corinthians 1:30** it says; *“Of God are you in Christ Jesus who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”* So, everything that God has by way of blessing, benefits, and mercies, are to be found in Christ.

To the guilty He says, *“Thy sins be forgiven.”* To the hungry, He says; *“Come and dine.”* To the weary, He says; *“I will give you rest.”* To the poor, He says; *“All things are yours.”* To the lonely He says, *“Lo; I am with you always even to the end of the earth.”* So, everything is in Christ.

The old-timers use to express it this way: “Sinner, if you can close with Christ.” Another way they expressed this was, “Sinner; if you can by faith lay hold upon Jesus Christ.”

Again, they would say, “Sinner, if you can find a saving interest in Christ, then every need will be met, every sin forgiven, every promise of God will be yours, but you will find them in Christ.”

He is the fountain of life; He is the source of mercy; He is the source of every blessing. That must be learned; that foundation must be laid, and we must understand that truth that outside of Christ *“our God is a consuming fire.”*

“He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath, judgment, and condemnation of God abideth on him.”

So, understanding that everything is in Christ; how can a sinner so approach Christ as to receive mercy? Here is the first direction: We are looking at the example of a man who came to Christ and who found mercy.

Here is the first thing about this man: He worshipped Christ!

I told you that this incident is recorded in two other places. **Matthew** said, *“He worshipped Christ.”* When Christ came down from the mountain a leper came and worshipped him. **Mark** says, *“He kneeled down before the Lord.”* Luke says, *“He fell on his face and worshipped Christ.”*

So, this is where we begin; this is where any sinner with any need who desires to come to Christ must begin. Whatever we need, whatever your condition, whatever your state, whatever your desire; Jesus Christ is God Almighty and He is worthy to be worshipped.

Let me enforce that with some Scriptures:

First of all: In **Hebrews 1:6**, it says; *“When he bringeth in the first begotten, (now that is speaking of the Father, bringing in Christ, the first begotten, the only begotten, the well-*

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

beloved), *when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, (He said) let all the angels of God worship him (worship Him).*”

We don't just respect the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't just admire Him or esteem Him, we worship Him. He is to be worshipped; *“Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive all power and honor and glory.”* Christ is to be worshipped!

Listen to **Hebrews 1:8**: *“Unto the Son the Father saith; thy throne O God is forever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.”* And again our Master said, *“I and my father are one.”*

So, I say that this is where a man begins, if he would come to Christ, if he would receive of Christ, he is going to have to know who Christ is and is going to have to come to Him in that character as God.

When a man knows that Jesus Christ is God Almighty, that Jesus Christ is none other than “very God of very God,” incarnate or revealed in human flesh, he will worship him. The Scripture says, *“He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.”*

In **John 1:14** it says, *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

When an angel appeared to Joseph to announce the birth of Jesus Christ he said to Joseph, *“fear not to take of thee Mary to be thy wife. That holy thing which is conceived in her is of God and shall be called the Son of God. Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.”*

This is the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Isaiah who said, *“behold the Lord himself shall give you a sign, a virgin shall be with child, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel (God with us).”*

So, that is the first lesson to learn, (if you would come to Christ) is to learn who He is. He will deal with you in His true character. He is God. He is worthy to be worshipped.

This is the starting point; who is Jesus Christ? He is the second Adam. Who is the second Adam? It is the *“Lord from heaven.”*

So, this man approached Christ, this leper, who had the disease, who had the disease of death, already consuming his body, who needed help, who needed mercy. He came to Christ and knelt down and fell at his feet and worshipped him. Now, that is where we will begin, *“the Lord is nigh unto them of a broken heart and a humble spirit.”*

The sacrifices of God are a humble spirit. The Scripture says, *“God resisteth the proud; he giveth grace to the humble.”* It says, *“He will humble those who are high and mighty and he will honor those who are broken.”* That's where we start.

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Secondly: This man, then, addressed Christ as Lord!

Matthew said, *“He came and worshipped him and said, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”* Christ said to his disciples; *“You call me Lord and Master and you say well, for so I am.”* Peter said, *“God hath made this same Jesus; (this is the message at Pentecost); whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.”*

My friends, the distressing thing about today’s religion, (television, radio, the pulpit, or wherever you hear them or wherever you see them), the distressing thing about today’s religion is the low esteem and the pitiful opinion that most church people, preachers included, have of the Lord Jesus Christ, a very low esteem, a very poor opinion.

They speak so lowly of Him. He is called “sweet, little, Jesus, boy.” I am talking about the Lord of glory. He is called “Bethlehem’s babe.” He is called “Super Star.” They talk about how disappointed He is and how defeated He is.

My friends; the Bible knows nothing of such a person called “sweet, little Jesus.” The Bible knows nothing of a “door mat” named Jesus. The Bible knows nothing of an “insurance policy named Jesus which men can take out and lay hold of just before they die.”

The Bible knows nothing of “one who will be your Saviour, who is not your Lord.” I am telling you the truth. The thing that distresses me; I heard a prominent TV evangelist recently say, “Jesus Christ is just like the devil; He can only do what you let him do.”

The Bible doesn’t know anything about Jesus Christ who is like the devil or as weak as the devil or as powerless as the devil. The person didn’t stop; the person went on to say, “And God is just like the devil; he will only do what you will let him do.”

Our God, our Christ, our Lord, is not hog-tied by sinners. I want you to listen to some Scriptures. God said, *“I have set my King on the holy hill of Zion.”* That is Christ and Zion is the church. *“I have set my King on the holy hill of Zion.”*

Our Lord said, *“All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”* That is what He told His disciples before they sent Him out to preach the Gospel. He said, *“All authority is given to me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and preach the Gospel.”*

When he was on His way to the cross and the women were following Him bearing that heavy, cruel, cross, up Calvary’s mountain, they wept and lamented and moaned. Our Lord stopped and turned and looked at them and said, *“don’t weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”*

My friends; don’t weep for Christ; He is Lord, He is King, and He is sovereign. That is what the Scripture says, *“All authority is given unto me.”*

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

When He prayed in **John 17**, He said, *“Father; thou hast given me power (all authority), over all flesh, that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me.”*

Do you know what Paul said about Him? He said, *“He is seated on the right hand of God expecting until his enemies be made his footstool.”*

So, today’s generation, (and they got it from the previous generation), has a bad and wrong opinion of Jesus Christ. He is not leaning over the banisters of heaven crying His eyes out because people won’t let him have His way.

He is seated victoriously at the right hand of the Father waiting for the whole universe to be made His footstool; that’s right; Jesus Christ is Lord.

All who came to Him in the New Testament in a saving fashion came to Him as Lord. This man did, he came and worshipped Him and he said, *“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean (whole).”*

Saul of Tarsus, when he was smitten down on the road to Damascus, the first word out of his mouth was *“Lord, who art thou Lord?”* Then he said, *“Lord; what will you have me to do?”*

Thomas fell at His feet and cried, *“My Lord and my God.”* The thief who received mercy looked at Christ dying on the cross and He said, *“Lord; remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.”* “You are not going to stay dead; you are coming into a Kingdom, Lord remember me.”

Zacchaeus who climbed the tree so he could see who Christ was, when the Lord came down and spoke to Him, said, *“Lord; the half of my goods I give to the poor.”*

Secondly: This man recognized the sovereignty, the power, the authority, the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He came and worshipped Him and he said, *“Lord.”*

I warn you and I tell you as plain as I can; I know a lot of people say, “well; accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. It doesn’t matter whether you serve Him, bow to Him, submit to Him, or receive Him as Lord; you can do that later on;” the Bible does not teach that.

If He is not your Lord, He is not your Saviour. *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart God has raised him from the dead, thy shalt be saved.”* That is what **Romans 10:9** says.

Thirdly: This is about this man’s approach to Christ; he recognized the Lord Jesus Christ sovereignly in this matter of salvation.

He recognized Christ’s sovereignty in the gift of mercy. He fell down and worshipped Him and said, *“Lord; (watch these words) if you will you can make me clean.”* Salvation is by an act of God’s will, not your will.

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

This man could not will himself to be clean. He couldn't will Christ to make him clean. He couldn't will anybody to make him clean. He was without hope, without help, without God, without ability, without power.

Now, I know that today's religion is forever debating about (the will, the question of man's will). There's man's will, God's will, free-will, and whosoever will. I've got this to say and I think it is very simple; I can simplify the matter for you, here it is!

Men may go on arguing and debating and quarreling and dividing over the question of the will, whoever's will is what we are talking about. I know whose will is going to be done. I have read in God's Word whose will is going to be accomplished, whose will is going to be done.

Now listen to **Daniel 4:35**: *"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou?"* That is very clear isn't it?

God does His will; *"thy will be done."* That is what our Saviour prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane; He said; *"Father; thy will be done."*

We are taught to pray that way. Our Lord, when he gave the disciples the model prayer, said; *"you pray thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* **Ephesians 1:11** says, *"He worketh all things after the council of his own will."*

James 1:18 says, *"Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth."* **Romans 9:16** says, *"So then, it is not of him that willeth nor him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."*

So my friend; let's not go on arguing, debating, quarreling, dividing over the will; I know whose will is going to be done; God's will is going to be done. *"None can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou?"*

I am saying that salvation is of the Lord in its eternal councils, in its planning, in its purpose, in its execution, in its application, in its sustaining power and in its ultimate perfection. *"He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the beginning and the end; he is the Alpha and the Omega."* Christ is!

"Salvation is the gift of God; the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life." This leper worded it correctly; *"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean"* and that is where it is.

I know that we have turned it around and we have said that God has salvation sitting on the shelf and we are down here begging sinners to reach up and get it.

Well, the publican in the temple cried, *"Lord, you be merciful to me a sinner."* The thief on the cross cried, *"Lord; remember me when thy comest into thy Kingdom."* This man said, *"Lord, if you will, you can make me whole."*

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

It was a sinner asking for mercy, not the sinner being begged to receive mercy. Our Lord said in **Romans 8:29**: *“Whom he did foreknow he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first born among many brethren.”*

“Moreover, whom he did predestinate, he called and whom he called, he justified, whom he justified, he glorified. Now, what will we say to these things?” We say, *“If God be for us, who can be against us? Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect; it is God that justifieth?”*

So, this man recognized in the third place that salvation is of the Lord, it is the gift of God; He bestows it upon whom He will. That is so!

Fourthly: This man recognized Christ’s ability and sufficiency to do for him what he needed to have done.

He fell on his face, he kneeled down, he worshipped Christ, and he said; “Lord, sovereign Lord, Almighty God, if you will, you can make me clean; I know you can. I can’t, they can’t and no one else can, but you can.”

The word “able” is used frequently in Scripture in reference to the work of Christ, the power of Christ. For example: In **Romans 4**, *“Abraham believed that God was able to do all that he purposed and promised.”* Abraham believed that God was able, *“and it was counted to him for righteousness.”*

Then, Paul wrote; *“He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him.”* He is perfectly able. Then he writes in the book of **Jude**, *“able to keep you from falling.”*

He is not going to lose what He gained. He is not going to lose what He purchased. He is not going to lose what the Father gave him; *“he is able to keep you from falling.”*

Then, this verse in **Jude**: *“He is able to present you holy, unblamable, before his presence with exceeding glory.”* He is able. In **Philippians 3** it says, *“He is able to change our vile bodies, (to raise them from the ground), and make them like unto his glorious body.”*

What’s the reason for this power and this ability?

First of all: There are three things; it is who He is (our Savior is Prophet, Priest, and King).

In the Old Testament there were prophets, there were priests, and there were kings but nobody ever held those three offices. There were men anointed to the prophetic office, to the priestly office, to the kingly office, but no man ever held all three offices.

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

But Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King. He is anointed, a Prophet to reveal God, a Priest to make atonement, and a King to reign over us. So, "*He is able; he is able to do all that he promised,*" all that was given into his hand to perform because of who He is.

Secondly: Because of what he did! The Bible talks about our Lord's obedience and it is divided into two parts, His active obedience and His passive obedience. His active obedience has to do with His living obedience to the law. He fulfilled the law by active obedience.

His passive obedience is His surrender to the persecution and death of the cross. He didn't go and nail Himself to the cross; they nailed Him. He submitted; that is passive obedience. He submitted to the Father's judgment and wrath and the cruel hands of wicked men.

So, we have righteousness which Christ our Lord worked out by active obedience and by passive obedience. He is able!

Then, not only is He able to save because of who He is and what He did but because of where He is. Where is he? He is at "*the right hand of the Father.*" The right hand is a place of love, acceptance, and power, and authority. Christ is there, seated. "*The Father hath seated him at his right hand.*"

Now, here is the last thing!

This man knelt down and worshipped the Lord. He recognized His sovereignty, His Kingship, and he said; "*Lord, if you will, you can,* (I know you can; you have the power and you have the ability, you have the sufficiency to make me clean)." He asked for the right thing, "*if you will you can make me clean.*" This is what we need.

My friend, I know that health is to be cherished but I don't have to have good health. Some of the greatest people of all ages have been people without good health.

Fanny Crosby, blind from birth, never could see with these natural eyes but she wrote some of the most beautiful hymns ever sung. There was Charles Spurgeon who was sick for 30 years and yet, one of the most powerful preachers and pastors who ever lived. The apostle Paul even talked about his weak and sickly appearance.

There are so many others through history who have had infirmities and afflictions. I don't need health; I do need mercy. I do need health of the soul. I do need God's cleansing.

I don't need wealth. Some of God's greatest men have been men who have been very poor. They haven't had material possessions and worldly fame.

Our Lord didn't have a place to lay His head. He said, "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of God has no place to lay his head.*"

HOW CAN A SINNER OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • HENRY T. MAHAN

I need mercy, cleansing, and righteousness. I don't need justice; I don't want that at all; I want mercy. I don't need health; I need cleansing of heart. I don't need wealth; I need the riches of His grace. It all comes from Him!

I want you to listen to what the songwriter wrote in closing:

**“I would but cannot sing
I would but cannot pray
Satan meets me when I try
And frightens my soul away.**

**I would but cannot repent
Though I endeavor oft
This stony heart cannot relent
For Jesus makes it soft.**

**I would but cannot love
Though ruled by love divine
No argument has power to move
A heart as hard and cold as mine.**

**I would but cannot rest
In God's most holy will
I know what he wills is best
And yet I murmur at it still.**

**Oh could I but believe
Then all would easy be
I would but cannot Lord
My help must come from thee.”**

That's what I am saying and that is the sum and essence of what I am preaching, “My help must come from thee.” He is Lord, He is sovereign, He is King, and He is able, His offering is sufficient; come to Christ, He will make you whole!