

Principle: Only Jesus can make God's promises come true for you because you have no claim on God but Jesus has authority to bestow God's gifts.

After Jesus heals the demon-possessed deaf/mute man the crowd is amazed. However, the Pharisees tell the crowd that Jesus' ability to drive out demons comes from Satan himself. Why would they make such an outlandish accusation?

They obviously hate Jesus. Their hatred must be based upon what they have just witnessed going back to their encounter with Jesus at Matthew's house. They don't believe that God wants to forgive or heal sinners. They believe they can buy their way into God's party. They don't believe they are unclean or if they are they can cleanse themselves. They believe they can create spiritual life or they don't view themselves as spiritually dead. They don't believe they personally need mercy. They have a claim on God's favor and no need of mercy. In other words, they reject Jesus not because the evidence for his deity is so poor but because they don't need him. This is always the reason that people reject Christ. It is not because there is insufficient evidence to support his claims but because people do not need what he has to offer. You can see this clearly spelled out in Luke 18: 9-14.

How do the unclean woman and the dead girl represent the condition of every human being? (See Ephesians 2: 1-3 & Rom. 3: 10-20, Heb.10: 1-2)

We all are made unclean by our sin and have no ability to cleanse ourselves. We are all dead because of our sin and have no means of giving ourselves life.

Do you think of yourself in these terms? When you consider the desperation of this woman and this ruler, can you relate? Do you feel your own helplessness like they did? When you consider their confidence that Jesus could heal/save them, can you relate? Do you go to Jesus regularly, with the same urgency each day?

We need to know that all of us, whether we are Christians or not, in our natural selves are unclean and dead. We must daily go to Christ for cleansing and for spiritual life. Daily we must acknowledge our inability to cleanse ourselves from our sin or to create God's life in ourselves. Each day we need another miracle of grace in our lives. You don't have to live enslaved to sin and enveloped in spiritual deadness. Christ is able to cleanse you of your sin and to give life to your dead heart. All it requires is faith, confidence that Jesus is able to do as he promised coupled with the persistent pursuit of Jesus in prayer to do what he has promised. The reason we do not persistently pursue Christ to make God's promises come true for us is because we do not really want his help. We are not concerned that we are unclean or that we have no spiritual life. We are not like this woman and this ruler because we do not have the same sense of desperation. As a result we do not experience his cleansing and his life.

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Why do these two blind guys call Jesus "Son of David"? (You'll need to read 2 Samuel 7: 1-17 and then Jeremiah 33: 14-17 & Matthew 1: 1, 6, & 16-17.)

In 2 Samuel 7 King David tells the prophet Nathan that he wants to build a temple for the worship of God in Jerusalem. That night God

speaks to Nathan and gives him a message for David. He tells him that not he but his son will build the temple and that God will establish the kingdom of his son forever. He promises David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me, your throne will be established forever." Based on this original promise to David the prophets after this begin to talk with greater frequency about the son of David who will be the agent of God in establishing the house and kingdom of David forever. It is he that will be the agent of God's salvation. Consider this one example from Jeremiah 33: 14-15, "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved." So these two men who cannot physically see can see with greater clarity than most others that this Jesus is David's greater Son. They know that Jesus is the Messiah and that he is able to extend mercy to whomever he wants.

When a person asks for mercy what does this imply?

It means the person is in trouble cannot help themselves. It usually means that the person doesn't have any right to the help he is requesting. In other words, mercy means that I'm getting something I don't deserve. You would never ask the bank teller to have mercy on you by giving you money from your own account. It's your money and you have a right to it. However, if you ask a friend for a loan you don't deserve it, you don't have a right to it, but you are asking the friend to be kind to you. You don't ask people for mercy that you don't expect to be merciful unless you have no other choice.

What does this request from these blind men tell us about how we should approach Jesus?

We do not have a right to demand to be treated well. However, we know that Jesus has a reputation for being merciful to people who are helpless and so we can go to him with confidence. We know that he delights to be kind to helpless people.

What does God owe you?

He compares himself and his work of dying on the cross for the sins of his people to be a “patch made out of unshrunk cloth” and “new wine.” Just as you cannot sew a “new” patch to old clothes without destroying the old clothes and put “new wine” in old wine skins without destroying both the wine and the old skins, so you cannot put the gospel of Jesus on or in the old way of doing religion. He is not saying there will be no religious practices (Note: “then they will fast” and the new wine goes in “new wineskins”). He is saying that now that he has come the old way of trying to gain God’s favor through certain kinds of religious practices won’t work. All religious practices must be done in light of Jesus’ coming and dying on the cross for sins. People are invited into the party of God based not on their performance but based on Christ’s performance in their place. People enter into God’s party because Jesus obeyed God’s law perfectly for his people and because he died for the sins of all His people, not because they perform certain religious duties. Therefore the practice of religion is forever changed. We obey God’s law and do certain things because we have been accepted by God in Christ, not because we are trying to make ourselves acceptable.

Do you ever do certain things or not do certain things because you think God will like you better if you do or don’t do them? Do you think that God will be more likely to keep his promises to you if you read your Bible and pray and go to church?

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What kind of a man comes to Jesus next (see Mark 5:22)? What is his problem? What is amazing about what he says?

He is a ruler of the synagogue, which means he is another very religious person, like the Pharisees and John’s disciples. He is also a very important person in this Jewish town. His daughter has just died. He is absolutely certain that Jesus is able to heal his daughter.

You need to consider why is that Matthew records this story right after Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees and John’s disciples regarding who it is that God helps? What has this man’s religious performance been able to do for his daughter? Why does Jesus go with him?

Here is a very religious person whose performance has been able to do nothing for his daughter. It could not keep her from getting sick and it could not heal her. Jesus does not respond to him because of who he is but because of his faith. Note again the humility (he kneels) before and the confidence in Jesus.

While Jesus is going with the man what happens?

While he is traveling to the ruler’s house and woman who has a flow of blood sneaks up behind him and touches the edge of his garment because she is certain that if she will do so, she will be healed.

Read Leviticus 15: 25-31. What can you assume about the experience of this woman during the past 12 years? What is her emotional, spiritual condition?

She has not been able to fellowship with God for 12 years and has been unable to have any personal contact with another human being for that length of time. She cannot cleanse herself from her disease and therefore cannot have anything to do with God. She is helpless to relate to God or to man unless she is healed.

Why does Jesus heal this woman? How would you describe the faith that saves based on the example of this woman?

She is healed simply on the basis of her faith, not because of anything she has done. Her faith is her confidence in Jesus and her pursuit of Jesus. Her faith is born in her desperation, her helplessness and in seeing Jesus as able and willing to save her.

When Jesus gets to the ruler’s house, what does he find? How does he respond to what he discovers?

A large group of people mourning the death of the little girl. They are making a lot of noise. There are flute players there. He tells the crowd that the girl is not dead but asleep and commands them to get out. Then he goes to the little girl, takes her by the hand and raises her from the dead.

HE MAKES GOD'S PROMISES COME TRUE MATTHEW 9:14-34

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been promised something by a person that makes you question the person's sincerity or ability to fulfill their promise? What makes you question the trustworthiness of a person's promise to you? Are there any promises of God that you wonder about because they don't seem to be coming true in your life?

The Bible is full of promises. It is full of God declaring that he will do certain things for certain people. How can we know, with certainty that the promises of God are going to come true for us? The apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 1: 20 says this about God's promises; "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." Jesus is the one who makes all of God's promises come true for us. In this passage in Matthew 9 we discover why it is that only Jesus can make God's promises come true for us.

STUDY

Where did John's disciples come to Jesus (see vv. 9-10)?

Jesus is still in Matthew's house finishing his meal with Matthew and his friends. He has just finished talking with the Pharisees about why it is he hangs out with "sinners".

What are some things we should presume the disciples of John know about Jesus (See Matthew 3 and John 1: 19-35)

John's disciples would know that John thought that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Therefore, they would be expecting Jesus to act like the Messiah, the Savior of the Jewish nation who would subdue all the nations and establish himself as ruler over the whole world.

What would prompt them to ask this question about fasting? What is it they presume the Messiah will do that Jesus is not doing?

For whatever reason they expected the Messiah to promote the practice of fasting. Jesus' disciples did not fast like they and the Pharisees fasted, therefore they were questioning the authenticity of Jesus' credentials. They are expressing doubt about his identity as the Messiah.

How was fasting viewed by the Jewish people of Jesus' day (see Luke 18:9-12)?

Fasting was a religious discipline that gained God's approval. If a person fasted then God liked them better. Fasting was necessary to be a part of God's kingdom and to be received into the Messiah's favor. Fasting was the mark of a person who was serious about their relationship with God. To not fast was evidence that you didn't take God very serious and were probably not going to be welcomed into his presence.

What is Jesus' first answer as to why it is he is not promoting fasting (v. 15)?

He compares himself to the bridegroom at a wedding party and his disciples to the bridegroom's best friends and guests at his wedding party. He simply states the obvious. It would be really strange for the friends of the bridegroom to sit in a corner and cry and to refuse to eat at the reception. It would mean that his friends were not happy with him and with his getting married. In the same way, it would make no sense for his disciples to fast and mourn while he is with them. After he leaves (a reference to his death), then they will fast and mourn his absence, but not now while he is present.

What is the significance of Jesus comparing himself to the bridegroom in light of Isaiah 62: 5?

Jesus is claiming to be God who comes to save his people. It makes no sense for the people God has come to save to be sad while he is with them.

What is the second reason Jesus gives for not promoting fasting in vv. 16-17? Be sure you understand the actual, physical realities he is using metaphorically before you describe what he means.