

## Matthew 8:1-17 – “After the Sermon”

(Pew Bible Page: 813)

**Intro:** Everyone knows about the Sermon on the Mount. It is Jesus’ most famous message. The Sermon on the Mount is world famous, and many people can recite large chunks of it from memory. But what happened after the Sermon? That’s what we want to investigate this evening. What happened next wasn’t insignificant. In fact, what happened after the Sermon was an exposition of things Jesus had just taught on the mount. Tonight, let’s look into that exposition and discover that...

**Proposition:** Jesus has authority to cleanse the sinner and is willing to cleanse us. Being, made well from Sin, we should rise and serve Him.

Billboard:	(vv.1-4)	Jesus is Willing to Cleanse
	(vv.5-13)	Jesus is Able to Cleanse
	(vv.14-15)	What Do We Do Now?
	(vv.16-17)	The Prophesied One

(vv.1-4) Jesus is Willing to Cleanse – Context is important. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ manifesto of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God has been defined as *“The sphere in which God’s kingly authority is gladly received,”*<sup>1</sup> and Jesus came preaching that the Kingdom was at hand. But who can enter the Kingdom? And how does one enter? The Sermon on the Mount answered the question of who can enter. Jesus made it very plain in verse twenty of chapter five **20** *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* This was a shocking idea to Jesus’ audience. Everyone thought of the Pharisees and Scribes as the epitome of righteousness because they scrupulously followed the letter of the Law. But Jesus said that outward righteousness – the kind possessed by the Scribes and the Pharisees – wasn’t enough to get one into the Kingdom. Something more was needed. Unless the inner person was cleansed – unless the heart itself was made righteous – no one could enter the Kingdom. Merely refraining from outward manifestations of sins like adultery or murder wasn’t sufficient: the lustful heart had to be cleansed, inner wrath must be purged. As Jesus drew near to the end of the Sermon, He made it clear that the secret to cleansing lay in being known by Him: **Matthew 7:21–23 - 21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* So those who are known and cleansed by Him are the ones who can enter the Kingdom. He must cleanse our inner man for us to enter. But now a new set of questions comes into view. Is He *willing* to cleanse me? Is He *able* to cleanse me? Clearly, He will cleanse some people. But what about *me*? In verses 1-4 of chapter eight, Jesus demonstrated that He is willing to cleanse even someone like me. **Matthew 8:1–2 - 1** *When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. 2 And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”* The crowds who had heard Jesus verbalize His message on the Mountain now followed Him into the valley where they would witness Jesus’ demonstration of His willingness and authority to cleanse. Notice that the leper who came to Jesus came with that question in mind: “I know you can – but are you willing to cleanse even me? A leper? An outcast from the community of your people? Even *me*?” Leprosy was a disease that caused one to be put out of society. It was forbidden for a leper to touch a ceremonially “clean” person and it was forbidden for a “clean” person to touch a leper. Lepers were social outcasts. Would Jesus be willing to cleanse the least desirable member of society? He would: **Matthew 8:3–4 - 3** *And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will;*

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## Matthew 8:1-17 – “After the Sermon”

(Pew Bible Page: 813)

*be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Jesus’ willingness to cleanse is in view here. He not only cleansed – He reached out His hand to touch the “untouchable” leper, then sent him away saying, **4** ... “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” Why did Jesus do this? The Law of Moses specified that if a leper was healed, he had to go to the priest to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving for his cleansing. Jesus sent the man to the priest because He sought no glory for Himself but wanted everyone to know that He himself kept the Law. Jesus came not to overturn the Law but to fulfill it because He himself was perfectly righteous.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus is willing to cleanse even the vilest sinner, making him a new man inside.

[ILLUSTRATION] In India, the system of cast is dominant over the lives of the people. At the top are the Brahmins, the priests and teachers. Next come the Kshatriyas – warriors and rulers. These are followed by the Valshyas – farmers, traders and merchants. Then the Shudras or laborers. Finally, lowest of all are the Dalits, the outcasts fit only to be street sweepers and latrine cleaners. It might be ok to be a member of any other cast, but you don’t want to be a Dalit! Any other cast has some semblance of dignity, but Dalits... Jesus is willing to save the Dalits – and we are all Dalits!

[APPLICATION] Anyone who wonders if Jesus is willing to cleanse their sin needs to read the account of the leper’s cleansing. No matter who you are; no matter what you’ve done; no matter how insignificant you feel – Jesus is willing to cleanse you of your inner sinfulness. That is the good news. No one is untouchable to Jesus. If you want to be cleansed, He will cleanse you.

(vv.5-13) Jesus is Able to Cleanse – Jesus is willing to cleanse, but does He have the authority to cleanse? That is the next question answered. **Matthew 8:5-9** - **5** *When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him,* **6** *“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.”* **7** *And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.”* **8** *But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.* **9** *For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”* The question in view here is Authority. Only God can forgive sin (cf. Luke 5:21). Does Jesus have that authority? That was the question for the people of Jesus’ day, and He answered that question through His actions. There are several interesting things to note about this demonstration. First, note that the centurion coming to Jesus was a *Gentile*. The Scribes and Pharisees would consider this man a “Gentile dog,” and Jewish tradition prohibited a ceremonially clean Jew from even entering such a man’s home. The centurion knew this very well, so when Jesus said, *“I will come and heal him,”* the centurion immediately responded, *“I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.”* From this we note as well that here is a man who had real faith. He obviously realized who Jesus was and realized his own unworthiness to host the Master. It is important to note that this is what true faith consists in: Faith that is real faith is faith in a person – God in Jesus. We sometimes make the mistake of thinking of faith as adherence to a set of doctrines, or a special feeling of confidence for healing, for example. But those are not definitions of true faith. Faith is not adherence to doctrine, or feelings of confidence. Faith is trust in the person of God in Jesus Christ, God’s Son. Doctrines lead to Him; confidence helps us approach Him – but faith is something else. It is knowing Him and being known by Him. Now faith is only given to men in one way: **Romans 10:17** - **17** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* Someone had told the leper about Jesus and he had believed. Someone had told the centurion about Jesus and he had trusted. But there were doubtless many in Israel who had been told about Jesus, yet did not believe

## Matthew 8:1-17 – “After the Sermon”

(Pew Bible Page: 813)

– the Scribes and Pharisees among them. What makes the difference? It is the work of Grace produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart of one who is being called by the Master. Those known to God from before the foundation of the world are drawn to Jesus in space, time and history by the work of the Holy Spirit. This man, this Gentile dog centurion, knew Jesus and was known by Jesus. And the centurion knew something else as well: He knew that Jesus had authority to command healing powers. He knew this from his own experience as a man with authority to command soldiers. Jesus was awed by the faith of the centurion, saying, **Matthew 8:10–12** **10** ... *“Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. **11** I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **12** while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* The faith of the centurion was astounding to Jesus in comparison to the unbelief of the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus then exercised the authority He had been given, saying, **Matthew 8:13 - 13** *And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.*

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus is able to cleanse because He has God’s authority to forgive sin.

[ILLUSTRATION] Willingness is all well and good, but if one does not have the power, nothing wonderful can happen! Consider a ten year old who with all his heart wants to play professional baseball. He dreams of making the great play that wins the world series. His heart is all in it! If only he could get out onto the field somehow! He could show ‘em a thing of two! He’s totally willing, but you and I both know something he doesn’t – he’s not yet able.

[APPLICATION] Blessedly, Jesus is not only willing to cleanse us – He is able to cleanse us from the inside out. This is so far removed from the normal way people think about righteousness. The average man is convinced that from his own resources, he can be righteous enough to enter the kingdom. Most people in our community think that God will let good people who do their best into His Kingdom, but of course that is simply not true. Perfect righteousness is the requirement, and not merely an external righteousness – those who enter the Kingdom must have a perfect inner righteousness in order to enter. It takes supernatural authority to create that kind of righteousness in a man or woman. Jesus alone has authority to do that based on His atoning work on the cross. Jesus is able to cleanse because He has God’s authority to forgive sin.

(vv.14-15) What do we do now? – After demonstrating that Jesus is willing to cleanse and is able to cleanse, these next verses are given as an application to the lesson. Granted that Jesus is willing and able to cleanse me, what am I to do once I am cleansed? The demonstration came through Peter’s mother-in-law’s situation: **Matthew 8:14–15 - 14** *And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. **15** He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.* We need not tarry over this, for the point is obvious: When Jesus exercised His authority to cleanse Peter’s mother-in-law of the fever, she immediately rose up and began to serve Him. That’s the proper response of someone who is cleansed inside and out by the Master.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Being cleansed from sin, we should rise and serve Jesus.

[ILLUSTRATION] Our Bibles warn us against sows who return to their mud-holes after being washed. It’s a vivid picture of absolute futility isn’t it? Why bother to wash a pig, if the pig’s inner nature drives it happily right back into the mud?

## **Matthew 8:1-17 – “After the Sermon”**

(Pew Bible Page: 813)

[APPLICATION] When Jesus exercises His authority to cleanse the inner person, the new nature that is created on the inside of that person, drives them to serve Jesus rather than shame Him. Jesus said, “By their fruits you will know them.” A changed nature always leads to a changed life. You can’t change the inside of a person without there being an outside transformation as well. It may take a while for the change to become fully evident – but it does occur. Someone once observed about a new Christian, “It’s the same old skin, but there is a new man on the inside.”

(vv.16-17) The Prophesied One – This section of Scripture closes by pointing out how it is that Jesus can cleanse us from sin and give us that perfect righteousness needed to enter the Kingdom of God. He can do this because He is the promised Messiah of God: **Matthew 8:16–17 - 16** *That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”* Jesus came exercising the Kingdom powers and authority that the Old Testament Scriptures had promised the Messiah would exercise when He appeared. Ever since the Garden of Eden God’s promise that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head had been waiting to be fulfilled. The prophets had foretold that when Messiah came, he would take our illnesses and bear our diseases. The people who were waiting for Messiah to come would recognize Him when He appeared because He would fulfill those Old Testament prophecies. And now Jesus was here and the proof He offered of His claim to be Messiah was written in His acts of power.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus is willing and able to cleanse us from inner sinfulness because He is the prophesied “seed of the woman” who is willing and able to crush the serpent’s head.

**Conclusion:** Everyone knows about the Sermon on the Mount, but many people who know about it have no idea what it truly teaches, conceiving of it as merely a higher kind of Law – updated Ten Commandments through which nice people who do nice things will be let into God’s Kingdom by that nice man, Jesus. But Jesus taught no such thing. Blessedly He taught something much better. An inner transformation can come that fits a person for the Kingdom, and Jesus is willing and able to make that happen, praise His holy name!