

He Took Our Affliction

Matthew 8:16-17

Halifax: 28 November 2004

Introduction

Look at what happened after Jesus healed Peter's mother in law of a serious fever.

- It seems that the whole city of Capernaum heard about it.
 - Soon there was a great crowd gathered around the door to Peter's house...
 - all looking for Jesus to cast out demons or to heal.
 - Jesus virtually abolished disease and demon possession in the cities to which He ministered.

But this huge crowd of desperate people around the door of Peter's house also has a way of reminding us of something negative...

- It reminds us of all the great needs that are in our world!
 - Is it not true that you could go to any city or town in the world today and find a great number of people in need of healing and deliverance?
 - In Ecc 5:17, Solomon said of man:
 - Ec 5:17: All his days he eats in darkness, And *he has* much sorrow and sickness and anger.
- Look around and what do you see in our world today?
 - You see children afflicted with terrible diseases and defects.
 - You see blind people, crippled people, deaf people, maimed people.
 - You see cancer and heart disease and arthritis and multiple sclerosis and aises.
 - Besides all this, there is poverty, destructive storms, and war.

These problems are bad enough in themselves;

- but when you consider them in connection with the true God,
 - they become even worse!
- The true God is a sovereign God...
 - And when you know that and accept that, it means that all these problems proceed from His hand!
 - As Jesus told us, a sparrow does not even fall to the ground without your Father...
 - God the Father is there, He is involved,
 - It is His decree for that bird to fall.

- It is His decree for that child to be crippled for life.
- It is His decree for that plane to crash.
- It is His decree for the earthquake to destroy the city.

- He cannot be removed from these things because He is God over all.
 - Eph 1:11 tells us that “He works all things according to the counsel of His will.”
 - Romans 11:36 tells us that “Of Him and through whom and to whom are all things.”

- Knowing this makes the problems of the world even harder to deal with!
 - Not only do we have deal with the problems,
 - but also with God who sends them.

 - As a result,
 - many people try to deny that He is sovereign in a desperate attempt to find comfort.

 - They suppose that God is in a terrible conflict with Satan and is not able to keep bad things from happening...
 - They assume that there are forces over which He has little control who can manoeuvre and slip things in when He doesn't notice.
 - In this way, they look at Him as One who can sympathise with them and who will help them as much as He can,
 - but not as the true God who is over all.
 - He is a pillow to cry on and to offer comfort and advice,
 - but He is not God who rules over all.
 - Was this not the prevailing sentiment in the aftermath of 9/11?
 - God was there to console...
 - He had done what He could to prevent and soften the trouble...
 - But few looked to Him as the one who had sent it.

- But suppose you do accept the fact that He is sovereign...
 - Then you have this great difficulty to deal with—
 - If He is sovereign then all this affliction in our world comes from Him.
 - He has sent it on purpose!

 - Now if this is true, it shows us that God is very displeased with us!

- To use the language of scripture,
 - it is “the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”
 - All our troubles testify to the truth that God has cursed the world because He is displeased with man.
- This knowledge only adds to our troubles the sting of guilt.
 - It is not just the troubles themselves that we must deal with...
 - but it is the fact that we have offended the most high God.
 - Dealing with an angry sovereign God is too much to handle!
 - And so it is that many who do not deny the power of God try to escape by denying the personality of God...
 - They conceive of God as an impersonal force or power that operates blindly and randomly.
 - “All these troubles are not the result of God’s curse” they say, “its just the way things are.”
 - “There is no intelligent reason behind it all, it just happens.”
 - “It is mother nature or fate or blind chance or cause and effect.”

But my friends,

- I declare to you that there is no true lasting comfort to be found in a refuge of lies!
 - Denying that God is sovereign or denying that He is personal is not the solution.
- There is a place where you can find true comfort!
 - True comfort is to be found in the Messiah whom God sent into the world to save the world!
 - God promised that this Messiah would establish a kingdom of righteousness in this sinful world...
 - And that this kingdom of righteousness will be delivered from His wrath and curse.
 - It will be a kingdom of people whose sins are forgiven and for whom righteousness is restored.
 - It will be a kingdom of people for whom death and suffering and infirmity will be completely abolished.
- In our text this morning (Matthew 8:16-17),
 - Matthew shows us that Jesus Christ is that Messiah whom God promised.

I. Jesus' actions show that He is the Messiah God promised.

A. Matthew tells us that by healing the sick and casting out demons,

- Jesus did exactly what Isaiah the prophet had said the Messiah would do.

1. In verse 16 and 17, He says,

- "And He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'"

a. This is marvellous news!

- Jesus fits the description of the One God promised that would come to remove the curse from God's people.

b. Matthew is saying to us,

- Look, do you see?
 - Do you see this One who is casting out demons and healing the sick?
 - Do you see this Jesus of Nazareth?
- This is the One!
 - He is taking people's infirmities and bearing their sicknesses...
 - He is fulfilling what God spoke through the prophets...
 - He is the Messiah God promised.

2. These two actions,

- casting out Satan and healing the sick,
 - summarise the work that the Messiah was given to do in removing the curse.

a. Let's look at each of them beginning with casting out Satan...

1) The entire work of Jesus can be summarised as casting out Satan.

a) Just after the Fall when God came to Adam and Eve in the garden, the promise of redemption was given with these words, addressed to Satan:

- Gen 3:15: And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."
- Redemption was to consist in the crushing of Satan.

a) John also summarizes the work of Jesus as destroying the works of the Devil in his first epistle:

- 1 John 3:8: “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”
- c) Redemption is also spoken of by Jesus as “Judging the ruler of this world.”
- 2) These are fitting ways to describe Christ’s work when you understand who Satan is and what He does...
- a) He is the author of sin,
- a murderer and the Father of lies—
 - the one who introduced lies into the world which led to the fall of the world.
- b) For this reason, He is called the “God of this world.”
- As such, he is said to “work in the sons of disobedience.”
 - He blinds of the minds of those that do not believe, and is even said to hold the power of death
 - He takes men captive to do his will—by tempting them and deceiving them.
- 3) And so because he is the source and propagator of evil,
- The Messiah’s ministry is to destroy his works and to cast him out...
 - And those who are saved are delivered from his kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Christ.
- 4) When Jesus came into the world, it seems that there was a heightened manifestation of the activity of Satan.
- This is not to say that Satan was inactive either before or after that,
 - but rather to say that His actions lay more hidden—behind the scenes until Jesus appeared in the world...
 - As soon as Jesus came,
 - there was a public display of Satan’s power so that the authority of Jesus over Him might be seen by all...
 - Therefore, when Matthew sees this display of the power of Jesus over Satan,
 - He concludes that this Jesus is surely the One who has come to crush the serpent’s head!

- Here is the One who has come to set His people free from Satan and the power of death that they might serve God...
 - Just as God in ancient times came down and redeemed His people out of bondage to Pharaoh that they might serve Him...
 - All that was a type of what Jesus has come to do...
 - And by casting out demons and claiming authority over them,
 - Jesus demonstrates that He is the Messiah.
- b. The other activity Matthew mentions that showed Jesus was the Messiah who had come to relieve us from the curse was his healing of all sickness...
- 1) There was not one person who came to Jesus with any sickness or infirmity that He did not heal.
 - He was not like the so-called healers of our day who turn many people away...
 - Jesus healed all who came to Him,
 - showing that He had full authority over the curse to wipe it away from His people entirely.
 - 2) Of course, we must understand that this was only done in a provisional way.
 - Those Jesus healed were still subject to death and future infirmity.
 - But His actions were to demonstrate that He is the Messiah who has the power and authority to cure all sickness and to crush Satan...
 - And that this is what He was going to do in time.
 - 3) Matthew looks at these two activities of Jesus—casting out demons and healing all sickness—
 - and declares—
 - “This Jesus fulfils what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet!”
 - “He is the one who Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses!”
 - “He is the One who came as God promised to release us from the curse.”
- B. Matthew is very eager to show that Jesus fulfils what is written about the Messiah in the prophets.
- He wants to make it clear that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah.

1. He has already spoken this way about Jesus several times in this gospel.
 - a. Back in chapter 1, He told about how Jesus was born of a virgin, being conceived by the Holy Spirit...
 - And then in verse 22-23 He adds:
 - Matt 1:22-23: So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."
 - He shows that Jesus is fulfilling what God had promised—
 - That the Son of God Himself would come into the world by virgin birth to save us from our sins—to deliver us from the wrath and curse of God.
 - b. Then in chapter 2,
 - Matthew shows that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet Micah had promised when he said:
 - Matthew 2:6: 'But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'
 - Then later in the chapter he shows how Jesus would be called out of Egypt and be called a Nazarene...
 - Here Matthew is referring to the general pattern shown by the prophets that the Messiah would suffer and be despised and rejected...
 - Indeed, Israel's whole history followed a pattern of suffering followed by deliverance.
 - c. In chapter 3, he quotes from Isaiah 40 to show how John the Baptist was the fulfilment of voice crying in the wilderness to herald the Messiah...
 - And in chapter 4, he quotes from Isaiah about Jesus' Galilean ministry:
 - Matt 4:15-16: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, *By* the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."
2. Matthew, more than the other evangelists,
 - has this emphasis on Jesus fulfilling what was spoken by the prophets because he is writing to the Jews who knew these promises.
 - a. The prophets had spoken to them,
 - and in these promises was the hope of the world!

- b. The world suffers because God, who has all power, has willed it to be so on account of human sin—
 - But this same God has promised a Messiah that would come to deliver us from the curse!
 - Clearly, Jesus is the One who fulfilled all that the prophets had spoken!
 - He is the Messiah!
 - Matthew declares it to be so!

II. But by selecting Isaiah 53:4 to speak of Christ’s healing ministry, Matthew also points directly to the suffering Jesus must undergo.

A. Isaiah 53 is certainly a passage that speaks about Christ taking the curse away from us...

1. But the main focus of this prophecy has to do with how Messiah Himself will be cursed!
 - a. The words Matthew quotes have a double edge—
 - When he says, “He Himself **took** our infirmities and **bore** our sicknesses,”
 - 1) These particular words could mean simply that Jesus takes them away from us and carries our sicknesses away from us...
 - In other words, that He removes the curse from us.
 - They do mean that, and that is what Jesus was doing...
 - He was removing sickness from people...
 - 2) But these same words can also include the idea of Jesus’ taking our infirmities upon Himself and bearing our sicknesses in His own body.
 - In other words,
 - He not only removes the curse from us, but also places it upon Himself.
 - It is one thing to knock a burden off of someone’s back,
 - it is quite another to place that burden on your own back and carry it yourself.
- But if you look at Isaiah 53, it is clear that this is exactly what is in view:
 - Isa 53:5-7: But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the

iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

- Isaiah is showing that the Messiah Himself will suffer the curse for the sake of His people!
- b. The ancient Jews knew that this was so.
- In the Talmud (though written after Christ) expresses the oral traditions of the Jews that go back before Christ.
 - The Talmud Tractate Babha Sanhedrim refers to the Messiah as a leper because He was to bear all our infirmities:
 - “The Rabbins say, "a leper" of the house of Rabbi is his name; as it is said, "surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted".
 - In their writing Zohar, it says:
 - “There is one temple that is called the temple of the sons of afflictions; and when the Messiah comes into that temple, and reads all the afflictions, all the griefs, and all the chastisements of Israel, which come upon them, then all of them shall come upon him: and if there was any that would lighten them off of Israel, and take them upon himself, there is no son of man that can bear the chastisements of Israel, because of the punishments of the law; as it is said, "surely he hath borne our griefs", &c.”
 - Clearly, the ancient Jews understood that the Messiah would be afflicted with all our afflictions.
 - And in another book of theirs (the Pesikta), God is represented saying to the Messiah:
 - “Will you bear chastisements, in order to remove their iniquities?”
 - He replied, "I will bear them with joy".
- c. So you see that when Matthew quoted these words to Jewish readers,
- They understood that in order to remove the curse from His people,
 - the Messiah would have to bear the curse in His own person!
 - We need to understand this also.
2. Brothers and sisters,
- Matthew is showing you that the only reason Jesus could justly heal the diseases of His sinful people and cast out Satan was because of what He was going to do on the cross!

- Jesus could have done none of his healing word and deliverance work if He had not been on His way to the cross...
 - a. There had to be a great transfer—
 - If our afflictions are likened to water,
 - Jesus is like a towel that dries us off and so takes all the water upon Himself!
 - He is like a poultice or compress that draws out all the poison from a wound into Himself.
 - b. He cleansed lepers only because He was to become unclean for us...
 - He healed the tormented servant of the centurion because He was to become a tormented dying servant.
 - He cured Peter's mother in law of her fever to serve because He was going to be shut up in the prison of death for us...
 - He cast out Satan because He was going to be delivered over to Satan for destruction in the hour of the power of darkness.
 - c. In order to lift the curse off of us,
 - Jesus had to bear the full weight of it Himself...
 - 1) All the arrows of God's curse were aimed at Him...
 - Upon Him they all converged when He went to the cross...
 - They zeroed in on Him and brought Him down to the grave.
 - 2) By quoting from Isaiah 53, Matthew is showing that Jesus lifted the curse only because He Himself was going to bear the curse...
 - "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."
- B. The necessity of His suffering in our place is taught throughout scripture!
1. The principle is always that the cross is first, then eternal life.
 - a. Did God promise life to Abraham through his seed?
 - See how Abraham first had to bear the pains of death, his wife being barren—
 - and then how, after Isaac was finally born, he had to be willing to offer him up on the altar until God stopped him and told him that Isaac was not the one...
 - but that He would provide the sacrifice.

- b. See how Israel had to bear a kind of death going to Egypt before they were given life in the Promised Land...
 - Here is the principle—the cross first, then life!
 - But this was only a type of redemption...
 - The Messiah was the One who was delivered over to the power of darkness to be crucified and cut off from God.

- c. See again how Israel's sins brought them to a kind of death over and over when God turned them over to their enemies in the book of Judges—and finally to Babylon some years later...
 - Here was the punishment for sins to bring them back to life...
 - But these captivities were only a picture of the captivity that the Son of God would bear to take away our sins!

- d. All the sufferings of Israel for their sins teach us that the cross comes before life...
 - The penalty must be paid first, then eternal life is given...
 - The curse of sin must be borne first, then blessing can be granted.
 - The sufferings of Israel teach us this principle that the cross comes first, then life...
 - But the sufferings of Israel are never sufficient because the full price is never paid by these sufferings.
 - Only the Son of God is able to bear the curse in such a way that it is eternally removed from all His people!

- 2. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
 - a. All of Israel's ceremonies pointed to Him as the substitute that would come and die in their place...
 - die the death that would set them free...
 - die the death that would set the whole world free...
 - all those who would believe on the Lord Jesus to be saved.

 - b. He must suffer that we might be relieved of suffering!
 - There could be no removal of affliction from anyone until all the demands of justice were met.
 - Every time Jesus healed anyone,
 - He was reminded that that healing demanded His own suffering!
 - None of the people He healed understood the cost, but He did...

- He knew that
 - by taking our infirmities from us He must take them upon Himself.
 - and that by bearing away our sicknesses, He must bear them in His own person.
 - In every healing, He stood in the shadow of the cross!

III. And so, my brothers and sisters who are trusting in Christ, there is abundant consolation for you in Matthew 8:16-17!

A. The healing ministry of Jesus on earth is your assurance that He has the authority to deliver you from the curse in the end.

1. Jesus was not delivering the people He healed on earth from the entire curse...

a. As I pointed out earlier,

- Every one of them was still subject to suffering in this life and every one of them died.
- He was only relieving them of certain effects of the curse for a time to display His authority.

b. His healing ministry is displayed before your eyes in scripture in order that you might know that He has the authority to fully deliver you in the end...

- He has purchased that right by His suffering on the cross.
 - Gal 3:13-14: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
- This was no small price:
 - Here was the One whose eternal passion was to please the Father,
 - cut off from the Father for our us...
 - It was such agony for this strong and mighty Lion of the tribe of Judah trembled and sweated blood.
- Now if such a price has been paid, you can be sure that it was not paid in vain.
 - By this sacrifice He has paid the full penalty of our sins!
 - By this sacrifice, He has been given all authority to deliver us from the curse...
 - no matter how great our sin may be...

- We can have full assurance before Him because...
 - “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.”
 - Surely He meets all the demands of divine justice.
2. It is true that you have not yet been delivered from the curse...
- a. Now as those who stand in history on this side of the cross, you can look back and see how He bore the curse...
 - And then you can look at the healing ministry Matthew speaks about and you can see that by taking the curse upon Himself...
 - He takes the curse away from you!
 - from all of you who trust in Him!
 - And you know with all assurance that by taking them on Himself He surely paved the way to take them off of you...
 - All of you who have come to Him for salvation.
 - b. You are those to whom a title to God’s everlasting inheritance has been given.
 - 1) Now you have the title, soon you will have the full inheritance.
 - The title is good because Christ has purchased it with His own blood.
 - Soon, Satan will have no power to afflict you...
 - Soon, all sickness and all infirmity will be taken away...
 - The curse will be fully removed from you just as vividly and truly as their infirmities were removed from the people Jesus healed on earth...
 - The leper’s skin was perfectly clear and his fingers and toes were fully restored...
 - The centurion’s servant was given full movement and Peter’s mother in law got up immediately to serve.
 - Soon, the full inheritance will be yours and the curse will be no more.
 - 2) Already you have been given the Spirit as a down payment and pledge of this inheritance...
 - And the Spirit has delivered you from bondage to Satan.
 - He has made you able to repent of your sins...
 - He has opened your eyes to see the glory of Christ so that you might believe...
 - He has freed you from bondage to sin so that you might serve God in a fresh new way and bear fruit for His glory...

- He has given you a spirit of prayer so that you cry out to God in sincerity...
- And a spirit of thanksgiving so that you give thanks to Him...
- And a spirit of praise so that you are now able to see His glory and worship Him.
- And a spirit of adoption so that you are filled with joy and hope and call God Father.

TRANS> What great consolation is yours when you see His authority and power to take away the curse because He has borne the curse for us...

- But there is something even more excellent for your comfort!
 - Remember at the beginning of this sermon, I spoke about the trouble we have when we see God's curse in our world?
 - And how it makes us want to deny His power as the sovereign One and His personality as the angry One?
 - And remember how I mentioned that as difficult as it is to bear the effects of the curse...
 - the greatest difficulty is to know that the curse is here because God is displeased with us.
 - Well brethren, here is the greatest consolation of all...
 - Not only does Jesus have the power and authority to deliver you...

B. He has the compassionate desire to deliver you!

1. When you see Him casting out Satan and healing sickness in Matthew,
 - You see a compassion such as words cannot adequately express!
 - Consider what I mentioned before—
 - That every time He healed a leper
 - He knew that He would have to become unclean...
 - And every time He cast out a demon,
 - He knew that He must be turned over to Satan!
 - He knew all this, but still He was willing to pay the price to take the curse away from us!
2. More than anything else, Jesus wanted to see us happily enjoying and praising His Father!
 - a. All those psalms that call upon the peoples of the world to praise God...
 - to bow down and worship Him!

- to call upon His name!
 - Do you know whose spirit it is that composed those psalms?
 - It is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - He longs to see the whole world praising God.
 - He is the one who says:
 - Ps 34:3: Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.
- b. He could not bare to see His elect cut off from God, estranged from Him, alienated by sin, under God’s wrath...
- He could not bare to see God’s own image marred and ruined by sin, writhing in anguish under the curse...
 - His desire to redeem us was so strong that He was willing to take the full weight of the curse upon His own head...
 - He was willing to writhe in anguish so that we might live unto God!
 - He was willing to bear all the pains of Hell so you will never have to bear them!
- c. Now let me see—
- Is there some hardened soul out there who is able to resist this Saviour’s love?
 - How can this be?
 - How remarkable!
 - Here is the all glorious Creator cursed for the creature!
 - Never a love like this love!
 - Come to Him, all of you, and be comforted!
 - There is no comfort in pretending that God is not sovereign...
 - There is no comfort in pretending that God is not angry at sin...
 - But there is wonderful consolation in knowing that
 - “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.”
 - Come to Him all of you and you will be consoled forever.