



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Matthew loses his career gaining destiny!

Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew 9:9-17, *As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. ¹⁰Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." ¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for ^[e]the patch pulls away from the garment, and the*

tear is made worse. 17Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Receiving the sinner and refusing the righteous.
The central message of the Christian faith.

Christians certainly aren't perfect.
That knowledge we already have.
It is our imperfection that has driven us.

Everybody in the world has been hypocritical. We are willing to admit it. We know our faults.

V13, *"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

God has come for bad people, not good people.
That is the message of Christianity, the essence of the Gospel.

Why did Jesus come into the world?

He says it, "To call sinners."

- Those who know they have a terminal disease,
- Those who are desperate,
- Those who are hurting,
- Those who are hungry,

- Those who are thirsty,
- Those who are weak,
- Those who are weary,
- Those who are broken,
- Those whose lives are shattered.

Sinners who know they are sinners.

“Lord, save me from that wicked man, myself.” Augustine

Jesus came to call not the righteous but sinners.

Luke 5:8, *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”*

1 Timothy 1:15, *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

Matthew said that Jesus had said He had come to call sinners.

Jesus has come to call sinners.

If He came into the world only for the righteous, there wouldn’t be anybody in His kingdom, because, *“There is none righteous, no not one.”*

But there are many who think they are righteous, and He can’t help them because they have no need.

That is why the Gospel has to be negative, because people don't come to Christ for a solution unless they understand they have a problem. They don't come for a healing unless they know they have a disease. They don't come for life unless they know they are death.

We must accept the death sentence. Jesus came to expose us as sinners. That's why His message was so penetrating, so forceful, why it tore off the self-righteousness of men and exposed their evil hearts. That was necessary, that they might see themselves as sinners. You will never win a relative/friend/neighbour to Christ until they know they need Him.

Matthew is presenting the messiahship of Christ.

Matthew chapter 8 and 9, he verifies the messiahship, Lordship of Christ, the saviourhood of Christ, the deity of Christ.

That Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. He tries to verify it here marvellously by the miracles that Jesus did.

They are not random miracles. They are categorically selected to show the range of Messiah's credentials and how they fulfil all the Old Testament expectations.

We have **nine miracles**, three sets of three, and after each set of three, there is a response given.

The first three miracles dealt with disease, sickness, and showed Christ's power over illness, disease, infirmity of the flesh. The power over the body and its decay.

After those miracles, there was a response. Three would-be disciples came. They were half-hearted, shallow, and superficial, and they said, "We want to follow you," but when they heard the price, they went away. The response was sad.

Then the second three miracles. The first of the second three was His power over the elements of nature, the wind, and the sea. The second is power over demons, and the third is power over sin.

Jesus has just forgiven a man's sin. Totally, comprehensively, and completely.

Matthew is saying, "The Messiah has power over the physical body. He has power over the natural elements. He has power over the demonic host, and He has power over sin.

Therefore, He is fitted to bring us the kingdom.

Matthew has just written this tremendous miracle where Jesus forgave a man's sins.

Then comes the response. The response is divided.

There is a positive and negative response.

- The positive response comes from a sinner
- The negative comes from one who thinks he is righteous.

But the response is in verses **9 through 17**.

V 9 is the call of Matthew.

The first part of the response!

Positive.

Jesus sees a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. He called him, "Follow me." Matthew arose and followed Jesus.
Positive response.

Jesus engages dialogue with the Pharisees,
Negative response.

Jesus has just forgiven sins.
Matthew makes that point in verses 1 to 8.
He has the ability and the power to forgive sin.

Immediately the question comes.

How much sin can He forgive?

Whose sin can He forgive?

Whose sin does He not forgive?

What are the parameters?

What are the dimensions of His forgiveness?

We find out the reasons in the following verses.

He can forgive sin, yes.

Forgives the paralytic.

Jesus has been teaching, verses 1 to 8 probably in Peter's house in Capernaum by the seashore, the meeting is over.

V 9, *As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

The paralytic is healed, and he had gone home with his four friends. Jesus goes out the door and the meeting is dismissed in that house.

Jesus leaves to walk along the shore, the northern edge of the lake of Galilee. The multitudes never left Him. The meeting may have been over in the house, but they followed Him.

While Jesus was walking along the shore with this mass of people around Him, at that point we come to verse 9.

By the way, in the other Gospel he was called Levi.

It's not uncommon for a man to have two names.

- Thomas was called Didymus.
- Bartholomew was also called Nathaniel.

- Simon was also known as Peter.

He may have been Levi, and the Lord gave him Matthew because **Matthew means “gift of Jehovah.”**

Levi and Matthew was the same person. But He sees him sitting at the tax office and said unto him, “Follow Me,” and he rose and followed Him.

Matthew was a modest man. He was truly humble. He reduces his whole conversion to one verse and says absolutely nothing about himself. But he has something very potent in mind.

The first part of the text shows Jesus receiving the sinner. Then the question comes, He healed the paralytic, and He forgave all his sins, but just how far does this forgiveness go?

Matthew says in verse 9, “He forgave me.”

Is that significant?

Absolutely!

Matthew was categorically the vilest person in Capernaum. By all the evaluation of the time, Matthew was the most wretched sinner in town. That’s why he uses himself as an illustration.

How far does this forgiveness go?

It goes to the extremity.

Matthew calls himself here what Paul tried to take as his title, the chief of sinners.

Why Matthew is a classic illustration of the Lord's power to forgive sin?

Matthew was a tax collector. They were a breed of people who served Rome.

When Rome took over Palestine, they wanted to exact taxes. Individuals living in the land of Palestine would buy franchises from the Roman government which gave them the right to operate the taxation system in a certain district or a certain town.

So, when Matthew bought into the Roman system, he revealed himself as a traitor to the cause of Israel.

Nothing, in the mind of a Jew, is as scandalous as being antinationalistic, anti-Jewish. To hire on to the oppressive conqueror, who has your people in his grasp, would be inconceivable in the Jewish mind.

Matthew bought his way into the Roman system. He bought a franchise for taxation from Rome.

Rome then required that he collect a certain amount of taxes. Anything he could get over that he could keep. The Roman government, in order to keep him happy and on their side would support him in his excesses and his abuses. So, when he did overcharge, and when he did extort the people, he had the Romans behind him.

There was gross oppression and abuse. He just had to pay Rome a certain amount, and everything else he could get was his own. Tax collectors then took bribes from the rich. They extorted from the middle class and the poor.

- They were hated.
- They were despised for their lack of nationalism, for being traitors of the worst kind.
- They had entered into the service of their country's conqueror.
- They were amassing fortunes at the expense of their own oppressed countrymen.

Most of the Jews believed that it was wrong anyway to pay taxes. They felt that only God should receive their money. They were looking backwards to an Old Testament theocracy.

The reason why the Pharisees asked our Lord was so devastating.

Matthew 22:20-22, *And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" ²¹They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him and went their way.*

The reason they wanted Jesus to answer that was because if He said, "Yes," He would have gone against everything the Jews believed. They believed that God was the only one who should receive anything they had. The Jews believed only in the theocracy.

So, they despised the fact that this was not only extortive and antinationalistic, but it was anti-religion.

If you were a tax collector, then you could not attend the synagogue.

- They were barred from the synagogue.
- They couldn't even have religious interactivity with the people.
- They were listed in a list with unclean beasts out of the Old Testament.
- They were like a swine.
- They were forbidden to be a witness in any court of law because they could not be believed.

- They were known as flagrant liars.
- They wouldn't even allow their testimony.
- They were classified with robbers and murderers.

They collected three kinds of tax.

1. Land tax or the ground tax. (Property tax)
2. Income tax.
3. Pole tax. (Registration tax)

If you are alive, you got to pay tax for being alive. If you are dead, you don't have to pay.

- Land tax, one-tenth of your grain, one-fifth of our fruit and wine.
- Income tax, one percent of your money earned.
- The pole tax was a determined figure that varied.

The tax collectors in general, there were two categories.

1. Gabbai
2. Mokhes

Gabbai:

Gabbai took the general tax.

The gabbai job was simply to take those basic, regular taxes, and then he would add surcharges onto that to make his own fortune.

Mokhes:

We have got all the other taxes.

- Taxes on what you buy, on the food you eat.
- Taxes you pay every time you fly on an airplane.
- Taxes that airplanes pay when they land at an airport.
- Boat taxes.
- There are taxes on axles on trucks and wheels on trucks.
- Road taxes, tolls you pay to go across a bridge.
- These taxes come under the second category.

But there was another kind of tax collector. This one dealt in the taxes that were other than these very stationary taxes. His job was to collect duty on everything else.

Mokhes was able to collect tax on all import, all export, everything bought, everything sold, every road, every bridge, every harbour, every town, every everything.

- They could invent taxes on anything they wanted.
- They could put taxes on axles.
- The more axles you had, the more taxes you paid.

- The more wheels you had, if you had a two-wheeled cart, it was cheaper to transport than a four-wheeled car.
- Pack animals.
- Pedestrian taxes. It cost you money to cross a certain road, to cross a certain bridge. Highway taxes, road taxes.

Market taxes.

If you wanted to have your little business in the marketplace, you paid the Mokhes a tax. Taxes on your ship, your boat, the dock. The fish you caught. They would open every package coming along the road. They had the right to open every private letter to see if there was a business going on in that letter, they could attach a tax to that. Unlimited.

The gabbai were despised.

The Mokhes were more despised.

They were unlimited in the abuses. They were oppressive, and they were unjust. They were the ones who sat at the conflux of the roads where Matthew is sitting.

Matthew would have been sitting by the north port of the sea of Galilee, and there probably was collecting taxes on all of that which was going on, on the lake, of industry: fishing and whatever else.

He would have been in the strategic point also on the road from Damascus and the orient to the west so that he probably taxed everybody going by east and west.

So, he had one of the wealthy tax franchises that the Romans had let out.

- Matthew wasn't a Gabbai.
- Matthew was a Mokhes.

Matthew was the more hated of the two, oppressive and unjust. Extortive, robbing people, taxing for everything and having the Romans behind him so that the intimidation and the threat was there.

Of the Mokhes, there were two kinds.

- a) Great Mokhes
- b) Small Mokhes

The great Mokhes were the ones who hired somebody to sit at the table and stayed behind the scenes, because they wanted to kind of keep their hands clean on the outside. They wanted to sort of have a good reputation.

The small Mokhes did it themselves. They actually sat at the table themselves, too cheap to pay somebody else. Too

unconcerned about their reputation to care what anybody thought. They did it themselves.

- It was one thing to be a publican.
- It was worse to be a Mokhes.
- It was worse to be a Mokhes, but far worse to be a little or a small Mokhes.

What was Matthew?

Matthew was the small Mokhes of Capernaum.

The worst man in the city.

As far as the people were concerned, he was the most wretched human being in their town. They hated him. They paid him because they were afraid not to.

What did the rabbi say about small Mokhes?

For a little Mokhes, repentance is well-nigh impossible.

If there's one sinner who could never be forgiven, it would be a little Mokhes.

Here Matthew was, the little Mokhes of Capernaum, sitting at his table, doing his thing.

Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

Matthew did.

Can you imagine the gasps?

Matthew.

We always thought of Matthew as a wonderful, but he was the worst.

We don't have that problem with John because he is always good in the Bible.

But Matthew doesn't talk about himself or about any of his potential, or about how honoured he is to be an apostle. He doesn't say a word about himself because he knows the kind of man he is.

Matthew was a man under conviction.

Jesus had ministered and ministered all over that area.

- They knew who He was.
- They knew everything He taught.
- They knew everything He did.
- They knew His wonders and His miracles and His signs.
- They heard what He said.
- They knew He was come for the forgiveness of sins.
- They knew exactly what they were getting into, and they were ready.
- Their hearts were prepared.

Matthew was a man under conviction. Matthew was a man who with all of his heart wanted the forgiveness, but the system told him he could never have it.

Matthew wasn't up at the house, seeking Jesus like the paralytic. He was down there getting his money because that's all he was consigned to do.

He recognized his sin and that is the reason he got up so fast and followed.

Luke adds a little statement.

Luke 5:28, *So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.*

Matthew doesn't say that. He won't say that because he is too humble. He's not going to talk about what he left.

If you were a fisherman, and Jesus said, "Follow me," you could follow, and you could always go back to the fish.

They are always going to be there.

But if you are a tax collector, and you get up and say, "I am leaving," you can't ever go back, because the next day, Rome is going to have somebody in your place, and game over.

So, the price that Matthew paid was far greater than much of the others paid.

Matthew did not say Lord, but I can finance this whole operation if you just let me grab these bags.

He just followed. The Lord didn't need that. Matthew knew about the Lord. His home base had been the city of Capernaum.

Miracle upon miracle upon miracle had happened there. He knew. That's why he followed so fast.

Matthew must have hoped for forgiveness. He must have longed for what Jesus offered him. And that's why he ran. You know, true conversion is like that. When you really see someone converted, they are not fighting, trying to drag on the garbage of the past.

Jesus fixed that look of love on him, searched the depths of the inmost part of his soul, turned him instantly into a man of God.

Matthew didn't need to think about it. When he heard, "Follow Me," he was up and gone.

Matthew said not a word, for his soul was in the speechless surprise of unexpected grace.

He was redeemed at that spot. Far from being depressed about what he left that he couldn't run fast enough to get to Jesus.

Matthew couldn't understand why anybody wouldn't follow when Jesus offered forgiveness.

Matthew lost a career and gained a destiny.

He lost his security and gained an undreamed adventure.

He lost material things and gained a spiritual fortune.

Matthew understood the Spirit of the Lord. He knew He had come to save sinners, and he knew that he was the worst, the unforgiveable, the worst man in his town.

Matthew was so overwhelmed that he decided to throw a banquet.

The banquet attended by the most rotten people in the history of banquets, because the only people Matthew knew were crummy, rotten, wretched, vile people. Because no one else would come near him. They despised him.

So, the only people he knew were people like himself prostitutes, murderers, robbers, thieves, irreligious, godless, and other tax collectors. Perhaps the local Gabbai and Mokhes.

Matthews Gospel doesn't tell us about the details of the banquet because Matthew in his humility, won't talk about that.

But like so many new believers, the first thought he had was to win his friends to Christ.

Luke 5:29, *Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.*

Mark 2:15, *Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.*

Matthew calls for a banquet in his own house.
Jesus is the honoured guest.

V 10, *Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.*

He has got the whole thing set up. He invites all the wretched, rotten, vile people in Capernaum, and they are all in one building.

Some may think that Jesus shouldn't go to those evil people. Exactly that is what the Pharisees thought. But that's not the way Jesus operated. There is a right way to fellowship with sinners.

Do you know what Jesus became known as?

Matthew 11:19, *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."*

Probably started out that reputation right here. But he became known as the friend of publicans and sinners.

The friend of publicans and sinners.

That's how they got to know him.

They were the vilest, the most wretched, and the worst people of all.

V 10, *Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.*

What a crowd.

All the worst people.

Can you get the picture of this is so devastating to the Jewish system of self-righteousness that it shocks them?

If Jesus is really God, why isn't He having a dinner with us?

Answer is because He came to save sinners.

If you are not willing to admit that He has nothing to say to you.

V 11, *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

The Pharisees linger outside. They wait till the banquet's over. As the disciples come out, they don't confront Jesus head on, they corner the disciples.

This is not just an honest question.

What they are really saying is a stinging rebuke. It is the venting of their bitterness, "Shame on you. Master or a Teacher who hangs around with such sinners."

This is vindictive. This is hateful.

True religious people, pious people, righteous men like we are, we shun such vile sinners.

What kind of a leader have you got who hangs around with the scum?

V 12-13, *When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”*

Jesus defends His disciples following Him.
Jesus has a threefold powerful argument.

1. Human logic.
2. Scripture.
3. Divine authority.

1. Human logic.

V 12, *Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*

People don't need a physician, but sick people do.
Jesus is indicting the Pharisees that you are the ones who are saying they are the sickest. Then by your own affirmation, they most need the physician.

The analogy is simple.
A doctor can be expected to go among sick people.

So, a forgiver should be expected to go among sinful people. His defence is simple. He went to the people who had the deepest need.

If your diagnosis is so accurate, where is your passion?

Where is your concern?

Are you a doctor who diagnoses but has no desire to cure?

What an indictment of their self-righteousness.

They so freely have defined them all as sinners but are utterly indifferent.

Matthew 23:23, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

Where is your mercy?

Where is your compassion?

Where is your love?

Where is your care?

You have made the diagnosis, and you have condemned yourself because you have stopped there.

The same is true with us. Those neighbours of mine, they are awful people. Sinful. You just stand on your own porch and damn them as sinners, or do you care?

Is there mercy?

Jesus is saying that I did not come to invite people who are so self-satisfied that they are convinced of their own goodness, that they are convinced they don't need anybody's help.

Rather I have come to invite people who are desperate and conscious of their sin and need for a Saviour.

The scribes and Pharisees would have made lousy doctors. They were more concerned with the preservation of their own holiness than with helping someone else.

They would be like a doctor who would say, "I had love to come over and cure you, but I might get our sickness."
Or "I certainly will give you a diagnosis, but I don't have time to bother with a cure."

Exodus 15:26, and said, *"If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."*

But Jesus comes along and expresses the fullness of the above statement.

Jesus came right down and got in the room and ate with them. He got as close to them as you can get.

Rather than being contaminated by them, He made them pure and white as snow. He was the divine Physician.

If they are sick, they need a doctor.

2. Scripture.

V 13, *But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

"Go and learn," is from the rabbinic writings.

The rabbis used to use it as an exhortation or a rebuke to persons who didn't really know what they should have known.

Go back to the books and come again when you have gotten the information and learn what your own text says.

Jesus quote **Hosea 6:6**, *For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

God says, "I am not concerned with ritual. I am concerned with a merciful heart."

In Hosea, God said to His people, "You have committed harlotries. You have committed adulteries. You have gone into idolatry. You have left Me. You have forsaken Me. Still, you turn out your little religious ritual."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," is the same thing in the Beatitudes.

God is indicting the Pharisees, saying, "You will never get the mercy of God, because you show no mercy, which indicates your hearts aren't right."

Jesus shows the self-deluded religionists they were far worse than the Publicans and the sinners.

Jesus says, "Go and learn," and you better learn what your own text says.

God had instituted the sacrificial system. God had ordered Israel to offer those sacrifices. But they were only pleasing to God when they were the expression of a broken spirit and a broken and a contrite heart.

When the heart wasn't right, the ritual was an abomination to God.

Jesus is saying that to them here, "I want mercy. You say you are righteous because you do the ritual. I say you are vile because you show no mercy, and that's the real indicator. You don't have the heart of God." God is never pleased with rituals separated from personal righteousness.

Some people just think they go through a certain Christian routine, go to church, and do certain things and God is pleased. He is never pleased with a routine that is separated from personal holiness. Without a change of heart, without a deep sense of sin, sacrifices were dead ritual, loathsome, hateful to God.

Amos 5:21-24, *"I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savour your sacred assemblies. ²²Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. ³Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. ²⁴But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.*

I ordained all those things, but I hate them because your hearts aren't right. I want justice, and I want righteousness.

3. Diving authority.

V 13, *For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

Luke 18:9, *Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*

You say you are righteous. I accept that as your self-evaluation. I have nothing to say to you. I have come to call sinners.

That's the whole issue.

Logic says it, Scripture says it, and Jesus affirms it.

Could these Pharisees really be righteous when they had no mercy for sinners, when they were blind to the word of their own prophet, when they were raging at a merciful physician who reached to those who so deeply needed help?

Jesus was right on target.

The word "call" is often used for inviting a guest to a home, to a meal, to a lodging.

Matthew 22:1-10,

Lord pictures His kingdom like a banquet, and He sends out invitations. But all the people who are invited refuse to come. That's the picture of Israel.

Then He says, "You go out into the highways and byways, and you find the poor, the lame, the crippled, the blind and bring them in.

The kingdom is for the hungry and the thirsty and they shall be filled.

The kingdom is for the hurting and the mourning and the meek and the sinful.

"I call you, but your pious, cold-hearted self-righteousness causes you to refuse my invitation. So, I invite those who know they need Me."

This is the theme of the Gospel, that Jesus came to save sinners!

Until you know you're a sinner, the Lord has nothing to offer you.

Matthew knew and he arose and followed Jesus.

The rest is a glorious history!

Matthew became a saint of God who penned this incomparable Gospel and entered into a spiritual inheritance that goes on forever.

Jesus receives sinners.

Matthew was the little Mokhes of Capernaum.

He saves sinners.

I am one.

I hope you know you are one.

If you do, you are within the range of the Great Physician.