

Studies in the Gospel of Matthew #47

The Power of Faith

Matt 17:14-21

Introduction:

1. After the mountain-top experience, Christ came down to meet a serious demon problem.
 - a. Many spiritual mountain-top experiences are quickly followed by Satanic problems.
 - b. But mountain-top experiences are to prepare us for problems in the valley.
2. Scripture gives continual testimony to the power of faith in God in the lives of believers.
 - a. It was faith in God's power that caused young Caleb to look at the land of Canaan with its giants and report to Moses that they should go in and conquer the land.
 - b. It was faith in God's care that enabled Job to say of Him in the midst of personal disaster, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him" – 13:15
 - c. It was faith in God's protection that enabled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to stand at the edge of the fiery furnace and declare to King Nebuchadnezzar, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. – Dan 3:17-18
 - d. It was faith in God's protection that enabled Daniel to continue faithfully worshiping God, even though it meant being thrown into the lion's den ([Dan. 6:10](#)).
 - e. It was faith in Jesus to forgive her sins that brought deliverance to the woman who entered the Pharisee's house and washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair ([Luke 7:37-50](#)).
3. It is not surprising that the first lesson Jesus taught the disciples after He returned from the mount of transfiguration was a lesson about faith.
4. Peter, James, and John had just had a glimpse of the power and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ
5. But now the disciples were brought face to face with their own *lack* of power, which was due directly, Jesus told them, to their lack of faith.
6. For this lesson, the scene shifts dramatically from the mountain of glory to the valley of despair.
7. From the dazzling majesty of the unveiled Christ in the presence of Moses, Elijah, and God the Father, in a glorious preview of the Lord's second coming, Jesus and the three disciples descended into the reality of the sin-cursed world at its worst.
8. The Lord used the first tragic situation He encountered after the transfiguration as a living illustration of a principle He wanted to teach.

I. The Pleading of the Father – vs 14-15

14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

A. Designation of the Affliction – "lunatic"

1. The word "lunatic" is related to the moon (lunar) and was often used to designate one with epilepsy.
2. In those days epilepsy was thought to be an affliction for people who had sinned against the moon and changes in the moon's phases governed seizures.
3. The boy's actions under the influence of the demon appeared to be a case of epilepsy, hence he was called "lunatic."
4. Demon possession is not epilepsy, and being epileptic does not mean that one is demon possessed.

BYZ **Matthew 17:14** Καὶ ἐλθόντων αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸν ὄχλον, προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπος γονυπετῶν αὐτὸν ¹⁵ καὶ λέγων, Κύριε, ἐλέησόν μου τὸν υἱόν, ὅτι σεληνιαζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει· πολλάκις γὰρ πίπτει εἰς τὸ πῦρ, καὶ πολλάκις εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ.

σεληνιαζεται verb ind pres mid or pass dep 3ps from **σεληνιαζομαι** - as being mentally out of control of oneself *be moonstruck, be lunatic*; distinguished from **δαιμονιζομαι** (*be tormented by, be demonized*) in which one is controlled by a demon (MT 4.24)

BYZ **Matthew 17:15** καὶ λέγων, Κύριε, ἐλέησόν μου τὸν υἱόν, ὅτι σεληνιαζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει· πολλάκις γὰρ πίπτει εἰς τὸ πῦρ, καὶ πολλάκις εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ.

B. Discomfort of the Affliction – “sore vexed...”

- This boy had some real problems with the demon possession. Satan and his associates never bless, they always curse.
 - One under the influence of Satanic forces does crazy and harmful things to himself and others.
 - One under the influence of the Holy Spirit does just the opposite.
1. Defining of the discomfort. "Sore vexed."
 - a) *These two words mean a bad experience and indeed what the boy was experiencing was a very bad experience.*
 2. Detailing of the discomfort.
 - a) *Matthew gives two aspects of the discomfort.*
 - b) *They were falling into fire and into water.*
 - c) *The boy could not control himself.*
 - d) *He could fall anywhere and falling into fire and water would bring much discomfort and peril.*
 - e) *Evil does not protect you from harm and peril but increases it.*

II. The Powerlessness of the Followers – vs 16

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

A. Courtesy in the Appeal – vs 14 – “kneeling down”

1. This man showed excellent courtesy in making his appeal to Christ in that he knelt down before Him.
2. This gave Christ much honor.
3. If you want help from Christ, you need to honor Christ.

B. Compassion in the Appeal – vs 15 – “have mercy on my son”

1. The compassion is in the word "mercy."
2. The man sought help through the compassion of Christ.
3. He did not demand help through merit but begged for mercy.
4. This is the proper way to seek help from God.
5. Mercy, not merit, opens the door of rich blessing from God.

C. Complaint in the Appeal – vs 16 – “they could not cure him”

- The complaint was critical in a twofold way.
1. Deficiency of the disciples. "They could not."
 - a) *They did not have the spiritual power to terminate the demon problem.*
 - b) *"They could not" could be written over the doors of many churches today, for they are unable to do much of anything to stop the tide of evil.*
 2. Dishonor from the disciples. "Thy disciples."
 - a) *The fact the failure was in Christ's disciples brought dishonor to Christ.*
 - b) *The enemies of Christ would rejoice in this failure of the disciples, for it reflected negatively upon Christ.*
 - c) *How we act as believers either honors or dishonors our Lord.*
 - d) *Too often believers bring much shame and dishonor to Christ by their unsavory conduct.*

III. The Perversion of the Faithless – vs 17-18

A. The Admonition – vs 17

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

1. **The people for the admonition** - "O faithless and perverse generation"
 - a) *This admonition is spoken to the crowd, for the disciples were not faithless and perverse (except for Judas Iscariot).*
 - b) *They had their weaknesses but they were not faithless and perverse in their lives.*
 - c) *This description would especially fit the scribes who were present.*

BYZ **Matthew 17:16** Καὶ προσήνεγκα αὐτὸν τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου, καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν αὐτὸν θεραπεῦσαι.

BYZ **Matthew 17:17** Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ὡ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη, ἕως πότε ἔσομαι μεθ' ὑμῶν; Ἔως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; Φέρετέ μοι αὐτὸν ὧδε.
διεστραμμένη, verb ptc perf pass nfs from **διαστρέφω** - (1) literally, of an object on the potter's wheel *become misshapen*; figuratively *pervert, corrupt, distort* (AC 13.10); passive, of the truth *be perverted, be distorted* (AC 20.30); in a moral sense *be depraved* (LU 9.41); (2) as causing someone to err *mislead* (AC 13.8)

- d) *They were faithless in that they did not believe Christ and were perverse in that they would rejoice that the boy was still demon possessed, for they felt the failure of the disciples reflected badly on Christ.*
2. **The problem for the admonition** - "Faithless and perverse generation" is a twofold indictment.
- a) **First, unbelief**
- (1) "Faithless" means they did not believe in Christ and the Word.
 - (2) Lack of faith is the foundation of our problems.
 - (3) The worldly experts struggle to find answers to the problems of society; but they will never find the answer when they ignore the problem of the lack of faith that exists in society.
 - (4) Skeptics are the honored ones in society, and faith is ridiculed.
 - (5) But faith in Christ and His Word is the great need of society; it is the solution to the greatest problems.
- b) **Second, unholiness**
- (1) "Perverse" speaks of corruption.
 - (2) Once unbelief has entered, corruption will follow.
 - (3) "Faithless" will be followed by foul conduct.
 - (4) The Psalmist corroborates this truth when he says, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God* [the attitude of unbelief]. *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works* [the action of perverseness]" ([Psalm 14:1](#)).
 - (5) The great moral corruption in our land reveals the great lack of faith in our land.
3. **The patience in the admonition** - "How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"
- a) *This is not a longing to leave the earth but a complaining of the slowness of the people to learn and believe.*
 - b) *It is similar to what Christ said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"*
 - c) *People are slow to believe not because God has not given them ample help to believe but because their evil hearts refuse to believe*
4. **The precept in the admonition** - "Bring him hither to me"
- a) *Bringing your troubles to Jesus Christ is the key to solving your problems.*
 - b) *When all else fails, Jesus will not fail.*
 - c) *Man (like the disciples who could not cast out the demon) may fail you, but Jesus never will.*
 - d) *He is the One Who can deliver us from evil.*
 - e) "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" ([Acts 4:12](#)).

BYZ **Matthew 17:18** Καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον, καὶ ἔθεραπέυθη ὁ παῖς ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης.

B. The Accomplishing – vs 18

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

1. The Rebuke
 - a) *Rebuking evil is the only way to deal with evil.*
 - b) *There is not much rebuking of evil today but rather toleration of it.*
 - c) *However, you will never stop the problems of evil without rebuking it—and rebuking is not praising evil or giving evil some allowance to exist.*
 - d) *Evil is destructive and cruel and has no respect for good things; the only thing you can do is rebuke evil.*
 - e) *Preachers should not remove the rebuke message from their sermons, or they will give evil room to cause more troubles.*
2. The Rapidity
 - a) *The termination of the demon problem was immediate.*
 - b) *Once Christ rebuked the demon it had to leave.*
 - c) *The rapidity of the miracle was necessary to prove that Christ did the miracle.*
 - d) *If the demon had not left the boy immediately but later on, folk would have attributed the removing of the demon to some other person or power.*

IV. The Power of Faith – vs 19-21

A. The Asking

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

1. The Savior was Asked
 - a) *The disciples were very wise to seek out the Lord to solve their puzzle.*
 - b) *Christ has the answers.*
 - c) *They could have asked the scribes and Pharisees the same question but they would never have gotten a correct answer.*
 - d) *We need to go to Christ through His Word to find answers to our perplexities. There is no better place to go.*
2. The Savior Was Asked Secretly
 - a) *The disciples did their asking in private*
 - b) *We need to get alone with God if we want answers from God*
 - c) *We can seek the Lord in public or private but privacy often gives us a better situation to listen to the Lord and get answers*

B. The Answering – vs 20-21

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

1. Poverty of Their Faith – “Because of your unbelief”
 - a) *The root cause was deficiency of faith*
 - b) *Without faith we won't go far spiritually*
 - c) *The world ridicules faith in God and His Word*
2. Power of Their Faith – “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard see”
 - a) *Faith is so powerful that if you only have a small amount of it, you can do great things.*
3. Practice of Faith – vs 21

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

 - a) *Faith does not hesitate to go without fleshly needs*

BYZ **Matthew 17:19** Τότε

προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ κατ' ἰδίαν εἶπον, Διὰ τί ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό;

BYZ **Matthew 17:20** Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν ὑμῶν. Ἄμην γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν ἔχητε πίστιν ὡς κόκκον σινάπεως, ἐρεῖτε τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ, Μετάβηθι ἐντεῦθεν ἐκεῖ, καὶ μεταβήσεται· καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδυνατήσει ὑμῖν.

κόκκον noun from **κόκκος** - (1) of grain or plants seed, kernel; (2) scarlet "berry"

σίναπι - mustard plant, an herb or shrub with extremely small pungent seeds (MT 13.31)

BYZ **Matthew 17:21** Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐκπορεύεται εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ.