

Matthew 17:1-8 Our Blessings in Christ

We are attempting to finish out Matthew 17:01-08, we started this two weeks ago.

Matthew 17:01-08 is The Prophecy of the Transfiguration of Christ Fulfilled. We emphasize the term *fulfilled* because verses 1-8 is the fulfillment of the last verse – verse 28 – of Matthew chapter 16 where Jesus said, "Truly I say unto you there be some who are standing here who shall not taste of death until they should see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." There have been theological debates over, "What exactly is He talking about here?" because He is making the promise that some are standing there with Him while He is teaching that are hearing these words that will not die until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Well He went into His kingdom and when He did many of those that were there died. So what does that mean? Who is He talking about?

Well, verse 28 sometimes is taken to be the first verse of chapter 17. Chapter divisions and verse divisions were put in by man. This is not put [there] by Matthew. But chapter 17:1-8 is very important. Verses 1-8 fulfills that prophecy that Jesus just gave in verse 28 of chapter 16. So this section is the continuation of The Principles of Discipleship that began back in chapter 16.

Paul said it best in Romans 8:18. He says, "For I calculate that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He says the suffering does not even compare, glory will be for us and revealed in us in the future. This is important as we need to see life in its complete perspective. Life in its complete perspective, not in part. If mentally we are aware of just the human side of life, we are aware of the physical circumstances around us, if that is all we are sensitive to, we have missed the whole perspective of life, because life is not just human it is also spiritual.

Verses 1-8 of chapter 17 fulfills what Jesus said. Notice verse 1, **And after 6 days, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain.** A couple things I want to point out to you. Five things I want to point out to you about this verse.

(1) The first one is the word *and*. I said two weeks ago, I never have done a word study on the word *and* before because *and* means *and*. But some English texts actually have the translation *now* or *but*. But it is important to see that the word **καί** (kai) in Greek literally means *and*. And it shows a continuation from chapter 16. So we are continuing with The Principles of Discipleship in chapter 16. It says, "And after six days." So you see Jesus in chapter 16 verse 28 was talking about, "Six days from now, you will see Me come into My kingdom and there are some who are standing here who will not die until they see it." This is what He's talking about.

(2) Now Luke, in Luke 9:28 says, "Some eight days after these things." So Matthew is saying, "After six days," Luke is saying, "Oh around 8 days," so it is between 6 and 8 days after Jesus was teaching at the end of chapter 16 that we have this incident called *the transfiguration* or *the transformation* of Jesus.

(3) **And after six days Jesus takes alongside Peter, and James, and John his brother.** This is the inner circle of the disciples: Peter, James, and John. These are the leaders of the disciples. And remember and keep in mind, because we are going to pick these other nine up later, that the other nine disciples are at the bottom of the mountain. Only Jesus and the three go up to the mountain, the high point of the mountain.

(4) It says, **And brings them up into a high mountain privately.** This would probably be Mount Hermon, its highest peak is 9200 feet. Others believe it was Mount Tabor. Others believe it was Mount Sinai. But it was probably Mount Hermon, very tall mountain.

(5) And notice fifthly, it was *privately*. Jesus took these three by themselves, left the other nine at the bottom of the mountain; so this whole thing happened just for them. Because we are going to see when He comes down off of the mountain, He is going to tell them, "Do not tell anybody what you saw." It was a private viewing just for them, and a purpose just for them.

Verse 2, **And He was transfigured before them...** A better translation of the word *transfigured* – and it is the word **ματεμορφώθη** (metamorphōthē), which is where we get our English word *metamorphosis* from – He was transformed. Not *transfigured*, not a different figure, but He was *transformed* both in substance and form before them. He was completely changed in form and substance. He was transformed into His glory before these three.

Notice His appearance, **...and His face did shine like the sun, and His clothing became white as the light.** Quite a spectacle to see. It reminds you of what the apostle John saw in Revelation 1:16 when he was on the island of Patmos. He heard a voice behind him, and he turned behind and he looked, and he saw this figure very much like what Matthew is describing here. Eyes with flames of fire.

Verse 3, The Communication with Moses and Elijah. **And behold! Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.** Moses is the representative of the Law and Elijah is the representative of the Prophets. So you have the Law and the Prophets – those who represent them meeting with Jesus in transformed form.

In fact for Elijah the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6 tells us that Elijah was to come to introduce the Lord at His coming. And we will deal with that next week also because the disciples are going to say, "We just saw You up there with Elijah, wasn't Elijah supposed to come first before You? But we just saw Him up there. What's with the Elijah and the prophecies?" We will see that next week.

In Luke 9:30-31 it tells us that they were talking about the Lord's departure. It does not tell us here what the communication was, just that they were talking with Him, but Luke says they were talking about His departure. It is the Greek word **ἔξοδος** (exodos), talking about the whole circumstances around Him going into Jerusalem and dying, buried, being resurrected, and ascending up into heaven.

Verse 4, **And when he answered** (or responded) **Peter said to Jesus...** Now I have to bring this up because it just shows his response. But Luke tells us in Luke 9:32-33, Luke tells us that Peter and the disciples were sleeping. They got up to the mountain and they were sleeping up to this point. When Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus they were sleeping. And so this whole revelation up on the mountain woke them up. It woke up Peter. And Luke said, "Whatever Peter's response was, he said it not knowing what to say," which is very dangerous. If you do not know what to say, it is best just not to say anything than to respond the way Peter did. So Peter responds to Jesus and says, "**Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You will...**" Now that is interesting because he is asking for the Lord's will to be done, "If you are willing."

"...let us make three tents here, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Let us make three tents and put you three in it, a great mountaintop experience for these three disciples. And again Luke says they say this not knowing what to say. It is the first thing that comes to their mind.

Mark 9:6 says that Peter did not know what to say because they were afraid. They were shocked. What do we say to this? Well okay, let us get three tents and put each one of these in a tent. This is Peter's mountaintop experience. But again he says, "If you will, let us make three tents."

Some people think, and this is a side note, some people think that the calendar date in which this event happened was during the festival of Sukkoth. Sukkoth means *tent*. Once a year the Jews live in little huts, little tents, to remind them of their traveling through the wilderness and God's provision for them. But Sukkoth was not happening at this time of the year, so it has nothing to do with Peter saying, "Hey, let's just celebrate Sukkoth up here." He said it not knowing what to say.

But this is what man centered gospel does. Man centered gospel takes the things of the Lord and puts a tent around it. "Let's make it human." Or builds a building around it. "Let us take the work of God and put it in a building. God's building." Everything happens within that building. Man centered gospel tries to put God in a bottle or in a formula, to work. Always what man does; always how he responds when He does not know what to do, when he does not know what to say. It has got to be the best that we can do at the moment, which is not spiritual at all and really has nothing to do with the Lord. It is a good thing Peter said, "If You will, if it is Your will let us make three tents." Obviously, it was not.

Verses 5 and 6, The Communication from God. **While he was speaking**, (that is Peter) **behold, a bright cloud** (a radiant cloud, an illuminated cloud) **overshadowed them. And, behold, a voice from out of the cloud saying, "This is My Son, the Beloved One..."** English texts say, "This is My Beloved Son," but literally *this is my Son, the Beloved One* – means the same thing but there is an emphasis in the text that I want to point out to you. **"This is My Son, the Beloved one, in whom I am well-pleased; hear Him,"** is the command.

This is not an ordinary cloud. This is a cloud that was illuminated, radiant - much like the cloud to lead the children of Israel through the wilderness. There were not just clouds

passing through, it is a cloud that had the presence of the glory of God in it. And God the Father, the Heavenly Father, spoke from heaven and gave His seal of approval upon His Son. This happened two other times - that the Heavenly Father spoke from heaven giving His seal of approval. The last time we saw this was back in chapter 3 verses 16-17 at the baptism of Jesus when the Heavenly Father spoke from heaven for the sake of John the Baptist and said, "**This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.**" So now this is the second time He personally speaks from out of heaven for the sake of these three disciples.

And by the way Peter in his letter in II Peter 1:17-18, Peter himself says, **For Jesus received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the majestic glory, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mountain.** So Peter says, "We have testimony. We were there. We saw it. We heard it." And it is interesting, the very next verse in II Peter chapter 1, he says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy." In other words, we are eyewitnesses of God's Word being spoken and being fulfilled. A very important point to make.

But I want to emphasize to you about the word *beloved*. "This is My Son, the Beloved one," God the Father says about Jesus. The word *beloved*, **ἀγαπητός** (agapētos) – you can hear the word **ἀγάπη** (agape) in there, it is an adjective, **ἀγαπητός** (agapētos). **ἀγάπη** (agape) means *love*. **ἀγαπητός** (agapētos) the adjective means *someone who is the object of someone's love*. So a *beloved one* is *someone who is the object of someone else's love*. In this essence the Son, Jesus Christ, is the object of God the Father's love; and He is pronouncing that in the presence of the disciples and to Jesus as they are on the holy mountain.

What is interesting about the word *beloved*, God the Father says this about Jesus. He does not say that about them, the disciples. In fact in Ephesians 1:6 the apostle Paul says that everything that Jesus has done has been done, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He hath made us accepted in the beloved one." Now if you can catch what is being said here, if you have been exposed to Paul's teachings - especially in the book of Romans - you understand that he is bringing out the fact the only thing well pleasing about me to God the Father is His Son in me. Not me.

Because Christians wrestle with their performance. I hear it all the time. "I'm just not a very good Christian. I do not perform very well. I did not do what was right for me to do. I'm a failure." Well that is what we are. That is why we are sensitive to it. Except that is not the basis of a right relationship with God. The basis of a right relationship with God is having Christ, the Son, living inside. Him in me and in my spirit is the only thing that is acceptable and well pleasing to the Father. When I stand before Him one day - and again here comes my own self evaluation, "Someday I'm going to stand before the Lord and what's He going to say to me?" Do you know what He is going to say to me? He is going to say, "Enter in because My Son lives in you." That is what He is going to say. He is not going to say, "Enter in because you were in ministry and for X number of years. You didn't fail that much, so come on in." It will have nothing to do with performance. It will have nothing to do with doctrine. It will have nothing to do with belief. It will have to do with the presence of Christ.

When God the Father pours out His blessings on His Son because His Son lives in me, the blessings are poured out upon me. I get the benefit of it all. It has nothing to do with whether I deserve it, whether I have earned it, whether I am worthy of it; it has nothing to do with that. It is God the Father blessing and pouring out blessings upon His Son, who happens to live inside of me. One of the reasons, one of the many reasons why it is important for the Spirit of Christ to come and live inside your spirit, He not be outside here somewhere. Because when God the Father pours out His blessing on His Son, He is in me so all that blessing is being poured out in my spirit, upon Jesus Christ for His benefit and mine.

In Ephesians 1:3, Paul said, again in Ephesians, "Blessed is (that is, *well spoken of*) God the Father who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." It is a done deal. You do not have to claim it. It is already yours because you already have Christ, and all those blessings go with Him. And because of His presence in us we are blessed. But the physical realm stays a mess. In case you have not noticed. Our physical health declines. We run into psychological and emotional and physical circumstances that are tough to deal with.

Let me just share with you something else. This is by way of counseling so maybe everybody here will hear it and it will answer the one question instead of it having to be said over the period of a month. When someone is wrestling with difficulties in this physical world, or with this physical body, the answer is to come into Christ and Christ to come into you.

The example that I always use – let us say it is pouring down rain outside right now. Pouring down rain and you are standing at my front door and you are saying, "I'm getting soaking wet out here in this rain, can you help me?" I would open the door and I would say, "Come on in. Into the shelter. Get out of the rain." But you say to me, "No, I do not want to come into there, I want to stay out here. I just want you to make it stop raining." Do you see the point?

Whenever we - I am talking about myself - whenever we have problems, we are always looking to the Lord to step in and make the problem go away or solve the problem. But He just says to us, "In light of what you are going through, surrender your life to Christ." The response most of the time that I get is, "I'm not interested in that. I do not want to give my life to Christ. I just want Him to help me." So we pray. We carry our Bible with us as a good luck charm and hope that through a lot of prayer - I call all my friends and ask them, "Pray for me, pray for me, it's raining! Stop this rain." - that God stops this rain. Let it rain. You come into Christ. Let Christ come into you. Take shelter. It will still rain but you will find your shelter and your protection and your blessing in the shelter, not in the changing of the circumstance.

So the key point here is that because Jesus Christ lives inside of me, He is my shelter. Whatever I am going through with health issues, whatever I am going through with circumstances and situations, my shelter is in here, not out there. My shelter is not going out there and praying, "God, make all the problems in the neighborhood go away." He does not have to. He is perfectly capable of sustaining me and helping me through the various issues of life. In fact, He does not have to make them go away, He is bigger than all of them.

John said in I John 4:4 concerning the spirit of antichrist - Satan's spirit that is in the world - he says, "But we have overcome them because greater is He that is in you, than he is in the world." Compare any difficulty that you might have to Jesus Christ Himself, is it bigger than Him? No. Is it more powerful than Him? No. So Paul says in Ephesians 3 then "turn in to the inner man where Christ dwells." There is your shelter. Whatever happens out here will continue to happen. He might change it. He might make it go away. He might let it get worse. I do not know. But He is not a genie in a bottle where we rub it and say, "Make my life more comfortable for me. Make it better."

My life is blessed in spite of myself. My life is blessed because God the Father pours out His love and His blessing upon His Son. And His Son has chosen to live inside of me. So if the Father poured blessing on His Son and His Son was outside of me, I would have to kind of tag along and try to get the drippings, you see. But because He chooses to live inside of me, when God the Father pours out blessings upon Christ, I am blessed also.

You see, here is my spirit. Here is my left hand and my right hand is the Spirit of Christ. When Christ's spirit comes into my spirit His Spirit becomes one with my spirit never ever to be separated, even throughout eternity. He promises to never leave us nor forsake us. He is there permanently.

Paul said at the end of Romans chapter 8 that "nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ." Nothing. In our minds, our minds might say, "I'm going through something that is overwhelming and it is going to separate me from Christ," but that is not true. That thing - whatever it is - would have to be stronger than Christ is. Satan just makes it seem big. He amplifies it to us. We focus on it and we get all obsessed and caught up in it. Because I am in Christ and Christ is in me, the Father bestows His love on His Son in me. So whenever I am focused on myself, whether I am worthy or not, the answer is always going to come back, "No, you are not," but that is not the basis. Your Christian performance, your human performance, your religious performance, is not the basis of God's blessing. It is because God is pleased with His Son and I have surrendered to His Son. So I get the benefits of that, as unworthy as I am.

Look at the Command: **This is My Son, the Beloved One, in whom I am well-pleased;** (the command is) **hear Him**. If I were to give one message to you and today was my last day here on earth, I would say, "When I go, hear him. Hear Jesus." It is not about people. We will miss each other. We miss the loved ones when they pass and go be with the Lord, but the reality is, listen to the Lord. His instruments will come and go but He will remain the same. I am loved by God because of Jesus. I am forgiven for my sins because of Jesus. I am going to heaven because of Jesus. I am not even in there other than I get to receive the blessing and the benefit of going.

Verse 6, **And when the disciples heard this, they fell upon their face and were sore afraid** (or *exceedingly afraid*). The word *sore* in King James means *exceedingly*. **σφόδρα** (sphodra) is the Greek word. They were exceedingly afraid. This is the natural response, the proper response.

And this is one of the places – I do not know if you have heard the phrase "being slain in the spirit." Some people practice and teach being slain in the spirit. They line people up, up front, come by and touch them on the head and they fall over. And they get this big line going. It is so that you experience the power and authority of God. Well, first of all there is no such thing in the Bible. There is no "slain in the spirit." Zero. Does not even talk about it. And then people will mention [passages] like this. When all this was happening the response is the disciples fell on their face. People say, "See, they were slain in the spirit." Well, unfortunately no one touched them. It was not at a meeting. It was a natural and proper response to fall prostrate in front of the presence of the glory of God. It is all the way through the Bible. People fall over as if they were dead, but nobody touched them, it was not in a line.

I am always the guy, the critic, that says, "Well, slain in the spirit is psychosomatic, basically." You can see people stand up there and basically, they are already telling themselves, "I'm going to fall over when he touches me." But I am always amused - though it is not funny - I am always amused that there have to be people behind you when they touch you and you fall over. They have to catch you, or else you are going to hurt yourself. Not so with Jesus. When you fall over in the presence of Jesus, you do not need anybody to catch you, you are not going to get hurt.

So they gave the natural and proper response. They fell on their face at the glory of the Lord and the presence with these disciples.

In verses 7 and 8, The Conclusion. **And when He came near, Jesus touched them.** They had already fallen on the ground, physical contact, something tangible after having seen this spiritual event. **Jesus touched them and said, "Be raised up, and do not be afraid."** The commands. In fact more literally, *be raised up*, showing an outside force is going to raise them up out of the Lord's command. It is His command that is going to raise them up.

"Be raised up and stop being afraid." Then verse 8, **And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus only** (or alone). So Jesus was back in his physical form. Elijah and Moses were now gone. The event of the vision is gone. And Jesus touched them and let them know that we are back in the physical realm again. And He says, "Rise up do not be afraid."

So what have in this portion of chapter 17 is a glimpse and glory. Now I am blessed in the Beloved One. I have to see life in its whole perspective. We always talk about the human, what is going on. "It's raining. How long is this rain going to last? How do we get rid of this rain?" I even know of people that got together for prayer meetings when we were in a drought, "How do we make it rain?" As if God is just waiting for people to pray so that He can make it rain. Well, it did not happen. Went for a few years. It is not about the physical realm. It is not wrong to pray about it. It is not wrong to pray about your health. It is not wrong to pray about your circumstances. But the key is to pray for the Lord's will to be done. Because He might not want it to be gone, because all it does is cause us to turn into the inner man where Christ dwells.

I think that is the biggest lesson that I have learned through a stem cell transplant - it was about a year and a half ago - is that the physical things around me all of a sudden became

detached. I have become more and more detached from the physical world. It is almost like I am dealing with life watching it on television. And it is not real. And we keep a chart, a daily chart, times that I am feeling detached and times that I am not feeling detached. It comes and goes - it usually comes rather than goes. But what is interesting is that I have lost that touch and that interest with physical things, which causes me to turn more inward where Christ dwells. The more the exterior is separated, the more I turn inward. It is the only place that I have to go, because out here does not mean anything anymore. I take care of responsibility but there is a lot of things - and I am sorry if I cannot sympathize with you - but there are a lot of things that just do not mean anything. It means something to us, it is important to us, but in the whole picture of things it does not mean anything.

So we have to see the whole picture. Matthew 16 presents suffering, which the disciples said, "No, Lord, that is not going to happen." Suffering. So then He takes them to chapter 17 and shows them glory. "Look what is going to be like after the suffering. Look at the end result. Look at the reward you are going to get for having gone through all of that, for Me not taking it away, look at the end result."

I receive all the Father's blessings that are upon His Son who dwells in me. I glean those blessings. And whenever I get focused on myself and my performance and how worthy I am, "Oh I'm just not a very good Christian.;" if the Lord were able to answer He would probably say, "Amen brother, that is right. You are right. All of those things about yourself are true." But my relationship with Christ is not based on how good I am. It is based on the goodness and the blessing of Christ and God the Father's blessing upon His Son, and all of those who are with Him.

Let's close with prayer.