

Matthew 17:14-21 The Doctrine of Faith Part 1

What I want to do is go over this introduction to the section with you, which the introduction itself is the meat and heart of the entire study. We are in Matthew 17:14-21.

In verses 1 to 8 we saw The Prophecy of the Transfiguration of Christ fulfilled. Where Jesus and Moses and Elijah were up on the mountain, transfigured before the three disciples up there, talking about the Lord's departure.

And then as they came down from the mountain, in verses 9-13, the disciples had some questions about the prophecies of Elijah. And so they asked the Lord about those prophecies as they are on their way down the mountain.

Now in verses 14 through 21 – now they have arrived at the bottom of the mountain and we are in a section here called The Principles of Faith. This section contains the various principles of faith itself. Now I know that we have studied faith before, both as a word study as well as some other details about faith. But these principles in this section help form what is to be a more complete and a more whole presentation of what faith is, and so we've entitled our series of messages from this section The Doctrine of Faith. This will be the doctrinal presentation of what the Bible teaches about faith.

Let us read verses 14 through 21, **And when they came toward the crowd**, (this is the crowd at the bottom of the mountain) **a man came near to Him, kneeling down to Him, and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, because he is being moonstruck."** Notice the literal translation, *he is being moonstruck*. King James says "he is lunatic," from lunar, it is an astronomical term. But, *he is being moonstruck*, and what the Greek word means, it comes from the word *moon* and it means to be *moon stroked*. It is the opposite of sunstroke.

Some people get moon stroked. They get out in the moon too long. That is why people talk about when there is a full moon out. My mother who was a receptionist in the hospital down in Oxnard would always tell us, "Every full moon the hospital's full. People just go crazy. They go wild." People who serve in restaurants say the same thing that people just get all energized and eager and just go out and cause trouble and they are out in the moonlight too much. I can remember when I delivered newspapers at night and I would be sleepy all night long, just drowsy, but on the full moon night I was wide awake and raring to go, just like it was daytime. I was moonstruck.

So, **"Lord, have mercy on my son, because he is being moonstruck and is suffering severely. For he often falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, and they were not able to heal him."** And so Jesus confronts the crowd, **And having answered Jesus said, "Oh faithless and perverted generation!"** There will be three words, three different words, used in this section all dealing with faith that we are going to need to know to understand the doctrine of faith. Here's the first one: **"Oh faithless and perverted generation!"** The Greek word is **ἄπιστος** (apistos) and it is the first of three words. *A faithless*

generation is a generation that has none, not just a little bit, but has none. And notice it is a generation. It is a whole generation of people that is faithless.

"Until when will I be with you? Until when will I bear with you?" (That is *hold you up, tolerate you.*) **"Bring him here to Me."** Which by the way we could save probably two or three weeks of in-depth study by saying that is the answer to the whole situation - **"Bring him here to Me."** It is bringing him to Jesus. It is not exercising some kind of gift on people. Jesus said, **"Bring him here to Me."** **Jesus rebuked the demon.** There was a demon in this young boy that needed to be cast out, Jesus rebuked it. **And the demon came out from him; and the boy was healed from that hour.**

Then, the cause of the problem, **Then when the disciples came to Jesus privately, they said, "Why were we ourselves not able to cast it out?" And Jesus said to them, "On account of your unbelief."** There is your second word, **ἀπιστία** (apistia). Some Greek translates here say *little of faith*, but it is the word *unbelief*, again without faith. **"For truly I say to you, If you should have faith – there is our third word, πίστις** (pistis), the regular word for *faith*. **"If you should have faith as a grain of mustard plant, you will say to this mountain, 'Be removed from here to there!' And it will be removed. And nothing will be impossible for you. But this kind does not go out except in prayer and fasting."** And verse 21 is in brackets because it is only found in the Greek text for the King James, it is not in the Greek text, and we will discuss that when we get to verse 21.

So the theme is faith. The principles of faith in this chapter lead us to the series on The Doctrine of Faith. And as I said this introduction this morning is just as important as the text itself.

First of all the word *faith* in Greek in its original language is the word for *persuasion*. For us it is a religious term. Whatever it means. What is *faith*? It could be a roof, for all I know. It could be a clock. What is *faith*? *Faith is persuasion*. It comes from the root word **πείθω** (peithō) that means *persuasion*. Peithos is the goddess of persuasion in Greek mythology. So *faith* means *persuasion*.

There are two kinds of faith or two kinds of persuasion in the world: human and spiritual. And there are two types of each of these.

1A) First of all human faith. The first thing to note about human faith or persuasion is that we naturally live by human faith. Stop and think about it. When you got ready to come here this morning, you got dressed expecting to arrive. Just in the natural. When you go to the store you take everything with you that you need to buy the things that you need. You have your grocery list. Why are you taking your grocery list if you don't expect to arrive there? Faith. When you get up and get ready for work or go get ready to go meet somebody, an appointment, we do it by faith. It is as natural. We naturally, in the human, this is human faith, human persuasion. We do not even have to think about it. It just happens.

1B) But then there is religious faith. Another type of human faith is religious. That is where the human being has to practice positive thinking. It is called *psychology*.

Religious faith exercised, it comes from psychology. In other words I have to read the Bible, see a promise in the Bible, and I have to apply it to myself. I have to keep repeating it to myself or reminding myself over and over again. That is psychology – that is me persuading myself. You see how it is persuasion?

2A) Then there is a second type of faith – first of all, human, but secondly, spiritual faith. Spiritual faith comes from two different sources of persuasion, both spiritual. One is God's Spirit. God's Spirit persuading and ministering to His people. If you get ministered to from anything that is said or done in our time of fellowship together, that is the persuasion of God's Spirit, not from me but in you. That is faith.

2B) There is also a second spirit, Satan's spirit. Satan persuades people. As a matter of fact in Galatians 5:8, Paul told the Christians in Galatia they were now following a false system of doctrine. He says, "This persuasion of yours, that is over you, does not come from the one who saved you." So he knows that there is a persuasion that comes over people. And you should see the look on people's faces when I bring up the fact. When they say, "Well, I disagree with you on this point." And I say to them, "Well, we are under two different persuasions, which persuasion are you under? I'm persuaded this way because look what the text says. Now either the persuasion is false, or the persuasion is of the Lord. But we have two different persuasions going on here, not just two different opinions."

So God's Spirit – when God's Spirit moves He moves according to faith and faith is persuasion, always.

First of all, I want to present to you the source of faith. Hebrews 12:2, the source of faith. It says, **We are to be looking unto Jesus the author (or architect) and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** He is the architect and finisher of our faith. He designs it, it comes from Him as a source, and He brings it to its completion.

Now I have to mention also to you, that the newer translations of Scripture have set out purposely to destroy the fact that faith belongs to the Lord, and it is a man-centered gospel. Let me give you one example. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, **I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life that I now live I live by the faith of the son of God.** *Of the son of God.* In the Greek text that is possession: *I live by the faith that belongs to the Son of God.* That is correct. And in the old King James in all of those places where possession is shown they translated it correctly. But the New King James, along with the NIV and the ESV and all the other newer translations, they have changed it to say, "I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live I live by the faith in the Son of God." Now all of that is true, we live by faith in Him, but that is not what the text is saying. The text says the faith belongs to Jesus, it is His faith that we live by; and the newer translations changed all of the phrases to show possession by Christ, they changed it to show He is the object not the subject. That is a critical error and they will not acknowledge. In fact, the scholarly response is, "Well that makes it belong to Jesus and

not us." That is right. But they changed it. They changed it. Jesus Christ is the source. He is the author and He is the finisher of our faith.

Next, and we will finish with this one, faith is produced by the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22 says, **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, faith.** Faith is a fruit of God's Spirit.

Even then, here is another side note for you, these same more modern translations change the word *faith* in that text to say *faithful*, instead of *faith*. So they do not make *faith* a fruit of God's Spirit. But they are kind of stuck too because the same word *faithful* comes from the word *faith* so the Holy Spirit has to produce faithfulness. That is true.

So the Spirit of God produces faith. If you understand faith to be persuasion, God's Spirit produces the persuasion of God. It comes from no other source. It is produced no other way.

And I want to finish with this verse that many people like to bring up. James 2:14, **Faith without works is dead.** That is what James says. **Faith without works is dead.** So people use that to say, "We got to go out and work. You see, if you have faith you've got to go out and work." Two important things to point out to you in James chapter 2, **Faith without works is dead.**

It is faith that works, not people working faith. Stop and think about it. Faith without works is dead. Faith is producing the works not people. So when they go to quote it all of a sudden it is like, "Oh, I didn't notice that part of it." You always think that I produce the faith and therefore faith is producing the works. It does not say people produce the faith. Faith without works is dead.

In James 2:14 he says, **What does it profit my brothers if a man should say I have faith and doesn't have works? Can the faith save him?** Does he have saving faith? Now let me give you another clue here. The word for *works* is the word *activity*. Faith without activity is a dead faith. So therefore, if you say you have faith then the faith should have activity to it. It is active. God's spirit is active.

It is like walking up to a box and it says *radioactive material*, I should be able to put a Geiger counter (or some kind of counter up there) and put it up there and it should register radioactive material. If the needle does not move something is wrong. Something in that box is not radioactive. It is just name only. If God's Spirit is in me and God's Spirit produces the faith then He is active.

And if you say, "I have the faith," but you do not have works - here is the question James asks: Can the faith that you are talking about save you? And interesting - because in the Greek text it gives the answer. "No." The faith that you have, this human faith, cannot save you. If you say you just have faith but there is no activity, if faith itself is not active then you are not saved. You do not belong to Christ.

So that is what I mean by *faith is produced by the Holy Spirit*. Faith is a fruit of God's Spirit. Faith without activity is a dead faith. It is just words. It is just religion. It is just

psychology. I mean, where is this activity? And again, people take James chapter 2 and pervert it and twist it.

As our text says in verse 22, **Oh faithless and perverted generation.** You take everything that is true of God and you twist it to where it is not true anymore. You go to James and say, "Well, see, there you go. Faith has to have activity." Yeah, faith does, not you. Faith without works is a dead faith. It is just words. I say I have faith. Can that faith save people? And James says, "No," because faith without works is dead.

And so with that we have run out of time. As we develop this scenario – we will complete it next week, we have communion next Sunday and continue on the doctrine of faith.

But I want us to understand that the majority of what is being taught today from the Bible – in churches, radio, tapes, Internet, whatever – is a man-centered approach to faith. In other words, the teaching says you have to produce faith to get God's blessing to work for you. That is not what the Bible says. God says, "If you belong to Christ, you have every blessing." You have it. You do not have to work to get it.

Earlier we were singing Standing on the Promises of God. "Well, you've got to claim the promises." No. You have to stand on them. You are already standing, what are you standing on? Christ. And so what is being taught in churches today is people being taught a psychological approach to the Bible and to Christ. To the point that if you claim a promise, or claim a blessing for yourself and you do not get it, it is your fault because you are not performing good enough. That has nothing to do with the teaching of the Bible. It has everything to do with putting guilt trips on people and telling them, "You are in control of how God blesses you." It is all from God. I have no faith unless God's Spirit gives me that faith.

Now you might say – I know, I said is going to quit, but I gave you two weeks off so give me a few more minutes. Now somebody might say, "Well, you know, unless God's Spirit moves me, persuades me to do something then I shouldn't do it because then it is not of God because the Bible does say *that which is not of faith is sin.*" And that is true. You put forth your human effort and it is not of faith, the faith of Christ, then it is a waste of time. "So what? I just sit around and do nothing?" I have had people tell me that. I said that earlier about people that said, "Well, if I don't do anything nothing is going to happen." But the key is, according to the Scriptures, if you know Christ and He lives inside you and He is the author of faith and His Spirit produces faith, it is impossible for you to be inactive. Impossible. Because He will not be inactive.

"Well nothing is happening!"

"Well, let's talk about your salvation, shall we?"

Because if Christ is living in you, you are radioactive, let me tell you. You have the power of the Creator of the universe living inside of you and you are telling me that if you sit back and leave it up to Him, nothing happens? Something is wrong. Something is wrong.

We will get more into this next week, the doctrine of faith. very important, very important.

Let's close with prayer.