

Matthew 17:14-21 The Doctrine of Faith Part 2

Continuing in Matthew 17:14-21, we started last week. Chapter 17 the first 8 verses began with Jesus being transfigured up on top of the mountain, transfigured with Elijah and Moses. But as they were coming down from the mountain, the three disciples that saw this were asking Jesus about the prophecies concerning Elijah - that Elijah was to come before the day of the Lord. So they just saw Elijah transformed with Jesus talking with Him, so they asked Him about those prophecies. And on their way down, verses 9 to 13, He explains the prophecies of Elijah.

In our section, verses 14 to 21, we enter into a section we have entitled The Principles of Faith. As they come down to the bottom of the mountain, they find waiting for them circumstances through which Jesus described and taught like no other place the various principles about faith. We have studied faith before on an isolated basis, but these principles form for us what we are calling in this series The Doctrines of Faith. So today is The Doctrines of Faith, part two.

Verse 14 tells us, **When they came down the mountain and toward the crowd, a man came near to Him, kneeling down to Him, and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, because he is** (as the King James says) **he is lunatic** (where we get our term lunar from) **he is moon struck** (which is the same as sunstroke, only he is moon struck, that is, he is affected by the rays and the light of the moon) **and is suffering severely. For he often falls into the fire, and often into the water.** So this demon is tossing him from fire to water and back and forth.

And he says, **"I brought him to Your disciples,"** because remember the other nine disciples were at the bottom of the mountain while Jesus and three others were up on the top of the mountain. He says, **"I brought him to Your disciples,"** that is the nine that were left behind, **"and they were not able to heal him."** They did not have the capacity to heal him.

And having answered Jesus said... this is the first of three different words that are used for the concept and teaching of faith. He says, **"Oh faithless and perverted generation!"** A *generation* is the people who were born in that era in that time. A kind of people that were born there. He describes the people as *faithless*. That is not a challenge. That is a statement of fact. They have no faith. And they are a perverted generation because they pervert everything that has to do with the truth of God.

He says, **"Until when will I be with you? Until when will I bear (or tolerate) with you? Bring him here to Me."** Which is the answer to the entire dilemma, bringing him to Jesus. Jesus is the only one who can heal. **And Jesus rebuked it, (that is, the demon) and the demon came out from him; and the boy was healed from that hour.**

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, in verse 20, the second of two of the three words for faith, **"On account of your unbelief."** *Because you are without faith*, literally. **"For truly I say to you, if you should have faith, (there is our third word) 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."

Back to verse 17, The Doctrine of Faith Part Two.

Jesus described this generation as a faithless generation, not a challenge, but a statement of fact of the condition of that generation. The word *faith*, the English word comes from the Greek word that means *persuasion*. That is what faith means. So whenever you see the word *faith* we are talking about a *persuasion*.

There are two kinds of faith in the world: one is human faith and the second is spiritual faith.

Human faith, there are two kinds, there are two types of human faith. (1) There is the kind of faith that we live by naturally. You got dressed and you came here prepared to have church service. You left home by faith. You trusted you are going to make it here and you expected to make it here, that is a kind of human faith. You will get up in the morning and do your chores for Monday, whatever your schedule is, and you will do it by faith, naturally. You expect to make it. (2) But the other kind of human faith is religious. That takes work. It takes work of persuading yourself. Those people who take the teachings of Scripture and tell you that you must apply it to yourself in order for God to bless you, that is psychological, it is not spiritual. Because I am taking the truth of Scripture and I am applying it to myself. I am talking myself into it. I am persuading myself. That is human, psychological, religious, faith, not spiritual faith. Not Biblical faith.

So the other kind, the first kind of faith is human, the second kind of faith is spiritual. And there are two types of spiritual faith. (1) One produced by God's Spirit. Every time God ministers to a person's mind and heart it is called *faith*. He is persuading. It is a persuasion. It is an influence. (2) But there is also Satan's faith, that is, Satan influences people as well.

As a matter-of-fact Paul said in Galatians 5:8, he says to the Christians in Galatia, "This persuasion that you are under does not come from The One who has called you." So Satan also has a persuasion, but it is a persuasion to get away from the truth not to follow the truth. God's Spirit is the one persuading people with the truth. So with that in mind we started off with two things about faith last week:

(1) First of all the source of faith in the Bible. Remember faith is persuasion. The source of spiritual faith by God's Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:2 told us that Jesus is the author and completer of our faith. It comes from Him. He is the author.

(2) Secondly, we studied how that faith is provided and produced by the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5:22 it says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, faith, long-suffering." Faith is a product of the Holy Spirit. He produces it. Man does not. Jesus is the author; He is the source. Galatians 5:22 says that faith is produced by the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is active producing the Lord's faith.

And we ended up last week on James 2:14 where James says, "**Faith without works is dead.**" And I told you two corrections from that text that that need to be noted, since people seem to get off on tangents that are not true. Faith without works is dead. It does not say that people produce faith, it says faith produces works. There is a difference. And the faith that we are talking about is the faith produced by the Spirit of God. That is why James said in James chapter 2, "Faith without works is dead." The word *works* is the word *activity*. Faith without activity is a dead faith. So James says in James 2:14, "You say you have faith, but I'll show you my faith by my works." If you do not have activity, you have a dead faith. You have a faith that cannot save you. It is not spiritual faith, it is human faith, religious faith. And so faith without activity is a dead faith, because the Lord's Spirit is always active and He is always producing the persuasion and influence and activity of God's Word, the truth of His word.

Now for today we want to study how that faith is given by the Spirit of God. In I Corinthians 12:9 Paul factually states that God's Spirit gives faith to people. It is produced by the Holy Spirit and He gives the influence and persuasion of faith to people. When God wants someone to do something He moves and persuades by the moving of His Spirit. It is called faith. He gives them that persuasion to do what He wants them to do and to go where He wants them to go. So faith is given, it is not claimed. It is not worked up by human beings. The spiritual faith of God is produced and given by God.

Now it is interesting that in Acts 14:9-10, Paul was on his first missionary journey and he came into a city called Lystra and there was a crippled man there in Lystra. And it says in Acts 14:9 the same man, **the crippled man heard Paul speak, who steadfastly beholding him and perceiving that he had faith to be healed.** Is not that interesting? Paul looked at this man and perceived that he had been given faith to be healed. God gave him the faith. **He said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet," and he leapt up and walked.** It was not anything that Paul produced. It was not any faith that Paul produced. Paul saw that the man had been given faith by God's Spirit to be healed. So Paul responds by saying, "Stand up on your feet," and the man was healed.

Later on in Acts chapter 14 after the first missionary journey was over, the missionary team came to Antioch where they had originated from, and they reported to the whole church what had happened on their missionary journey. In Acts 14:27 it says, **And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.** God has to open the door of faith. You cannot walk into the door faith, you cannot claim faith, you cannot function by faith unless God opens the door. The Book of Acts also tells us that God opens the door of repentance to the Gentiles. A person cannot repent unless God gives them the ability to repent. This is all given by God. So faith is produced by the Holy Spirit and faith is given by the Holy Spirit.

Next, God's Chosen Way to Express Faith. This is God's chosen way to express faith. Paul says in Romans 10:17, **Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.** God's chosen way to bring His persuasion and His influence and His ministry is when believers gather together to hear the word of God. That is His chosen way to persuade others and to minister to others.

There is another persuasion I had mentioned earlier when we first began. In Galatians 5:8, where Paul told the Christians in Galatia, **This persuasion does not come from Him that called you. You are following the wrong doctrine there in Galatia.** Believers need to be rooted and grounded in God's word and God's truth, constantly hearing the persuasion and influence of the Spirit of God. We are only gathered together here once a week, but we are under the influence of all the other things of the world and all the other people all the time. There is a definite need to be persuaded and influenced by God's Spirit and cleansed from all the influences that we have been around all week long. So if we miss, we possibly could be coming up on a time in the future here where we might not meet for a couple of weeks. Hopefully you stay in the Word so that you don't lose that influence and that persuasion in the midst of being persuaded by a spirit that is not of the Lord.

We are told to *Live by faith*. But it is interesting, here is something you probably did not know from the Scriptures. We are told to *Go by faith and not go beyond it*. How many times do you hear today people saying, "Well you don't have a blessing from God because you don't have enough faith"? In reality Paul said in Romans 12:3 to only go by the measure of faith that has been given to you. Romans 12:3, **For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has measured to every man the measure of faith.** Do not go beyond it. Go by what God's Spirit is saying. Go by what God's Spirit is moving. He is saying do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Sometimes we think that we are people of great faith and we can get God to do things for us. In reality we are told not to go beyond faith.

So then the question comes up, "What about where the Lord said in Matthew 9:29 about two blind men that came to Jesus? It says in Matthew 9:29, **Then He touched their eyes saying, "According to your faith let it happen to you."** I hear this quoted all the time. If faith is produced by the Holy Spirit, if faith is given by the Holy Spirit, if we are to go by faith and not go beyond that, what about when Jesus said, "Let it happen to you according to your faith," speaking to these men who were blind, and that Jesus was going to heal them?

Now here is where the technical points of the text match up with what the entire Bible is saying about faith. The word *your* - personal pronoun *your* - in Matthew 9:29 as it is in all of the Scriptures that have that phrase in it. It is a personal pronoun and a personal pronoun in the genitive case shows possession. So He is saying, "Let it become (or happen) to you according to your faith that you possess." Well, it kind of sounds like He is telling them they have to create their own, but in Greek if he was telling them to create their own, it would be a reflexive pronoun not a personal pronoun. It would be, "Let it become to you according to the faith that you are producing." That is reflexive, "that you are producing for yourself." The personal pronoun shows possession. So you put that together with what we have studied about faith and it is given by faith is that these men who were blind were given faith, and it was now in their possession, and the Lord is now responding to the faith that was now in their possession. See not everybody had faith in their possession. Only the people to whom the Lord gave faith to.

We are going to be covering that next week, all the different instances in Matthew's Gospel where faith was given to certain individuals for the purpose of displaying the example of

what faith is. Not in the sense of here is how they produced faith, now you must produce the same kind of faith. It is not a challenge. Certain individuals were given faith so that everybody around in that generation could see what faith was all about. I hope that makes sense.

So I have had people over the years come up to me and tell me, "What about when Jesus said let it be to you according to your faith? It must be that God responds according to the faith that you produce." No, the faith that you possess. If God gives you the faith, just like Paul in Acts chapter 14, God will respond to the faith that He gives.

So the teachings of faith that are taught today in most churches, are what are called the teachings of man-centered theology. That is taking various pieces of scripture about faith and challenging people to come up with the faith. Telling them that if you do not have the faith, God cannot bless you. Or God will only bless you according to the kind of faith that you produce. And many people are going around guilt ridden because they are trying to produce the faith and people are telling them, "The reason why you're not blessed of God is because you don't have enough faith." You do not produce the faith. That is religious faith, psychological faith. They are asking you to practice certain truths from the Bible upon yourself. God's blessings are based on His faith, not ours. Based on His timing. Based on His purposes. Based on His will, not ours. We are under grace, not under law. We are not under law to practice certain formulas to get God to bless us. God does not work that way.

Next week will finish out this section. We will take part three and finish out this section.

Let's close with prayer.