

Matthew 17:22-27 Deny Yourself and Be Free of Offense

Alright we are finishing up Matthew chapter 17 today, Matthew 17:22-27. So far:

In verses 1-8 in this chapter we have studied The Prophecy of the Transfiguration of Christ Fulfilled. As Jesus appeared with Elijah and Moses in front of the three disciples that he took with Him up on the top of the mountain.

On their way down from the mountain, verses 9-13, Jesus explained the prophecy concerning Elijah to the three disciples because they had a question about him.

Then when they got to the bottom of the mountain - for the last four weeks - we spent a lot of time on The Principles of Faith. As we studied for four weeks about The Doctrine of Faith as it is presented in the Scripture in the principles of faith as it is found in verses 14-21.

I want to add one more note before we leave the subject of faith. Even though we dissected faith and its principles I want to let you know that faith is not a science. Faith is the name of the presence and activity of the Spirit of Christ in a person's life. So it is not that a person needs to seek faith, a person needs to seek Christ. If you have received Christ, if you have been born of His Spirit, you are of the faith, you are of the persuasion, and you are a believer.

And as I mentioned last week the word *believer* is the verb form of the noun *faith*. So a person who lives under the persuasion of God's Spirit because Christ is living in them, that person is a *believer*, *someone who lives under the persuasion*.

But for today we have two sections. The first section in verses 22 and 23, The Proclamation of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Let us begin reading at verse 22, **And while they were abiding in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered over into the hands of men. And they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they grieved exceedingly.** Two verses just stuck right in the middle of a chapter that is filled full of miraculous happenings and miraculous teachings. Jesus being transformed and the disciples seeing that. Jesus casting a demon out of a man's son and then teaching about faith. Now right in the middle of it all Jesus talked about what He must do; that He, as the Son of Man, is about to be delivered over, they are going to kill Him, and He is going to be raised up on the third day. And when the disciples heard this, they grieved exceedingly.

This is now the third time since chapter 16, the third time that Jesus is mentioning about His crucifixion and His death and His resurrection; and the third time the disciples got bummed. All of their joy and all of their excitement and all of their ecstasy because of all these miraculous things that have been happening all of a sudden, the bottom just dropped out. They grieved exceedingly. Jesus told them the first time in chapter 16 verse 21; the second time in chapter 17 verse 12; and now, for the third time He is telling them about this crucifixion that is going to take place.

And they grieved exceedingly. In Luke's account in Luke 9:45 it tells us *they did not understand*. They grieved exceedingly because they did not understand but it was concealed from them so that they could not perceive it. So the Lord kept them from understanding these events that were coming up about His death and resurrection. The only thing they were impressed with was the fact that He said He was going to get killed. And even though He says, "I am going to be raised up on the third day," it did not comfort them any at all.

The Jews believed in the resurrection by the way. According to Daniel 12:2, the Jews believed that the wicked and the righteous will be raised up in the resurrection. And, of course, that is taught to us through the book of Revelation; that both the unsaved and saved will be raised up and will face judgment. So for a Jewish person to hear, "and on the third day He will be raised up," it is like Mary and Martha who said, "Oh we know that there will be a resurrection in the last day." And Jesus is telling them, "No, it is going to happen here in a minute." But they were looking to the doctrine and the promise of the resurrection because the Jews held to that promise. So they understood that there would be a resurrection some day, but the impression upon their minds was that He was going to be killed even though He shared with them He was going to experience a resurrection one of these days. They heard *third day*, but to them it was one of these days.

Now it is important to understand - and we have seen it this morning in our prayer requests - when there are people who are listening to the word of God, who are growing in Christ, who are seeking the Lord, all of a sudden, they will experience hardship and even devastation, even destruction, or even death to animals close by or people close by. There is the good with the bad as we would say. Jesus is presenting a balance to these disciples so that they would get the balance of life. It is not all this miraculous transformation on the mountain. It is not all this miraculous casting demons out. In fact, back in Matthew chapter 10 when Jesus gave the disciples authority to cast out demons and they came back and they rejoiced over it, in another place it tells us that Jesus said, "Do not rejoice that you cast the demons out, rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Do not get all caught up in that. That is important but there is another side to the coin. There is a balance here. There is the balance of the crucifixion. In the Lord's life there are miracles, miraculous things that He does in your life and in mine, but there is also the crucifixion. Everything runs through the cross. Everything goes through the cross. And so even though Jesus performed these miraculous signs He says, "The cross is still involved," and they were exceedingly grieved at hearing that again.

Back in chapter 16 verse 21 is where Jesus first said this and Peter rebuked Him and told Him, "God have mercy on you. This will never happen to you." And Jesus told him, "Get behind me Satan," speaking to the influence over Peter, "Get behind me Satan for you are an offense to Me." You are keeping me from fulfilling the mission which God has sent me to fulfill. And so He told them, He says, "If you seek to preserve your life you are going to lose it." If you try to seek to save your life from the hardships of life, you are going to lose your life, you are going to lose your soul. Because then He gave the principles of discipleship, He says because "If anybody desires to come after Me let him deny himself," reject himself, reject what you want, "let him take up his cross and let him follow behind Me." That cross that Jesus was talking about was the cross that Jesus died on, because when Jesus died on the cross, He died our

death. He died for me, and He suffered the punishment for my sins, but He died my death so that I would not have to die on the cross.

But at the same time that death, when I received Christ, that death became very real to me. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, he said, **I have been crucified with Christ.** So when Jesus died, I died with him because He died my death. **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, who loved me, and gave himself for me.** So, that crucifixion that Jesus experienced in the cross is very real in my life, Paul says; and I have to take that cross in my life every day, and I have to deny myself, and I have to follow after the Lord in all of the miraculous things that He does.

And everything that He does is miraculous. I have come to realize that over the years. Even the very simple things that we think are normal everyday simple things that Jesus does, yet He does things that are more miraculous, I am beginning and have begun to realize that even the simple things are a miracle from the Lord. Simple things, because without Him in even the simple things it is just human flesh.

And I was crucified with Jesus Christ. Now that is something I do not want to hear. That is something the disciples did not want to hear. We want to hear the miraculous. But the crucifixion of Christ is very much a part of the Christian walk. There is two parts to the Christian walk: (1) there is the miraculous things of Christ and (2) there is the miraculous things of the crucifixion. That I experience the crucifixion every day so that my self-life, my ego, will be nailed to that cross, as Jesus died for me.

The second part of the end of the chapter is, The Payment of the Temple Tax, verses 24-27. It is only found in Matthew, so we do not have other Gospels to refer to.

First of all, in verses 24 and 25, we have the confrontation between Peter and those who received the **δίδραχμα** (didrachma) and I will explain that here in a moment. **And when they had come into Capernaum...** This is now where Jesus lived with Peter in his house for the three years, most of the three years of His ministry. So now they are back into Capernaum.

...the ones receiving the tribute money... Which is literally in the Greek the **δίδραχμα** (didrachma). **δί** (di) is the word for *two*, and **δραχμή** (drachmē) is the word for *one quarter of a shekel*, measurement of money. So didrachmas are *two drachmas* or *half a shekel*, which means a lot here as I will share with you in a moment.

...those who received the didrachmas... the tribute money. These were not tax collectors. These were those who collected Temple Tax. And according to Exodus 30:11-16, God instituted a half shekel Temple Tax on all of the people of the Jews who were 20 years old and older. There was the Temple Tax in order to support the operation of the Temple and its repairs.

So these who received the tribute money or the didrachmas, **Came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the didrachmas?"** Now it is interesting, in the Greek text it expects the answer *yes*. *Yes, He does pay the didrachmas.* So they are expecting. They are asking the

question expecting Peter to say, "Yes, He does pay." Verse 25, **And Peter says, "Yes, He does."** He confirms.

And when he entered into the house... that would be his house, Peter's house, where he and Jesus were staying. And according to the text and the mention of the personal pronouns in the text, it was just Jesus and Peter entering into the house, the rest of the disciples either went off to find food, or went off to find other shelter, or were off on errands of some kind.

But **When he entered into the house**, that is Peter, **Jesus prevented him...** Literally *anticipated him*, that is what the word literally means. Jesus anticipated what Peter was going to talk to Him about after Peter gave confirmation that he pays the Temple Tax. He knows what he was going to say, so He anticipated Peter, **by saying, "What do you think, Simon?"** Interesting, He calls him his Hebrew name.

"From whom do the kings of the earth receive custom or tribute?" This would be your normal tax laws. The custom is the taxes on goods coming into the city. The tribute would be poll tax, people being taxed for coming through on their own. So he says, in the tax system, as we know it - and most of the nations do this, they tax people coming in through the gate, they tax the goods they are carrying in, they tax them as people: head count, and they tax the number of people coming in, in order to earn money. But one of the rules was that the king did not tax his own royal family. Everybody else got taxed except for his family. So Jesus is bringing out this. You say, "What has that got to do with the with the Temple Tax?" Nothing. He is just bringing out what is customary amongst the practice of taking taxes.

He says, **"From whom do the kings of the earth receive custom or tribute? From their sons or from strangers?" Peter says to Him, "From strangers,"** because he does not tax his own family. You even have that and in the Royal lines over in England, the royal family does not get taxed, but they receive the revenue from the taxes. **Peter says to Him, "From strangers."** **And Jesus said to him, "Then indeed the sons are free."** They are exempt, right? So now, the Lord is making application. He is saying, "Basically Peter, I Jesus should not have to pay tax according to the rules." In John 2:16 Jesus said that the Temple was His Father's house, which is interesting. The application here is the Temple Tax that the father required for everybody should not be required of the royal family. Therefore Jesus should be exempt from paying the Temple Tax based on the tax practices, even though He does pay it.

But verse 27 here is an interesting concept of paying and giving. **"But that we may not offend them, when you go into the sea, cast a hook and take the first fish coming up."** Peter, of course, is a fisherman. **"And when opening its mouth, you will find a piece of money."** It is called a **στατήρ** (statēr). That is the Greek word, **στατήρα** (statēra), a *stater*, which is a piece of money equivalent to two half shekels. **"When you take that stater, give it to them for you and for Me."** Payment for two people to pay the Temple Tax, Peter.

So even though Jesus could make an argument and say, "Well according to the law I should not have to pay taxes because the Temple is My Father's house," and He can make a big deal about him being the Father's Son and being in the royal family. But He says, "In order that we may not offend them, what I want you to do is go down, cast a hook into the sea, catch a fish,

open its mouth, take the coin in the fish's mouth, and go and give it to them for the poll tax, so that we do not offend them," which is an interesting concept. Jesus did not have to pay the tax; He could claim it according to the law, but He did not want to cause an offense.

He did not want them to say, "Oh look, He is claiming His deity, so He is trying to say He gets out of paying the poll tax." And so people become bitter because they have to pay the tax. Everybody else has to pay. There is something about claiming one's self rights - "I don't have to pay, I don't have to do that" - and what does it cause? It causes people to be offended. And again the word *offended* is the word **σκάνδαλον** (skandalon), it means *a stone of stumbling*. Jesus said, "If we don't pay it is going to cause people to stumble over us in coming to know the truth. But if we do pay then people cannot use that as an excuse and we will have fulfilled the poll tax law."

Now interesting that for the believer the great measurement of spirituality, the great measurement of spiritual maturity is sacrifice. Sacrificing myself. We just got through talking about it in verses 22 and 23: *deny yourself*. Sacrifice yourself and your self rights and your self wants for the betterment of others so that they would not be offended and say, "Well, you know, those Christians! I have to pay tax, but they don't," and so cause them to stumble over the truth. Sometimes we just do not care, we just want our self rights exercised.

In Romans chapter 13 verses 1 and 2 and 5 through 7, Paul says, **Let every soul be in submission to the higher powers. For there is no power or authority but that comes from God: and the authorities that are, are ordained by God. Whosoever therefore resists the authority, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment.** Verse 5, **Wherefore it is necessary that you be in submission, not only for wrath's sake (that you do not experience wrath) but also for conscience's sake. But for this cause pay tributes also, (pay your taxes) for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.** It is ordained by God that you pay the dues enacted by government. Again somebody would then say, "But they tax us too much! They misuse our money!" And what Paul is saying, "It doesn't matter. Give to them the taxes due. That is your responsibility. That is your sacrifice. Even if you have to work all week long just to pay your taxes, pay your taxes." That is God's ordained way in order to be a testimony.

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom due; fear to whom fear; and honour to whom honour. Give to the government. Give to the people in government positions the honor that is due them. They are ordained by God to be in those positions. They themselves might be ungodly people, but it does not matter because they been put there as a policing unit in society.

In I Peter 2:13-15 he says, **Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: (remember that) whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or as unto governors, or as unto them that are sent for punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.** So they are the policing unit. Be in submission. **For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.** Do it for the Lord's sake, not for your self righteous sake. In other words do not let people be offended at the Lord Jesus Christ because I am claiming my self rights or because I am trying to get out of giving my

money over to evil, or to an evil society, or evil things. Pay to whom custom is due, give it to them.

He goes on to say in Romans 13, do not owe anybody anything, pay the debt, do not try to get out of it because that is your testimony, your sacrifice. To people around you who know you. Everybody around us is trying to get out of paying. Everybody. Even me. I try to get out of paying if I can. On the other hand the word of God is telling me that I need to sacrifice and look for ways to pay. Look for ways to pay my responsibility and let that be a testimony for the Lord's sake. Let it be a testimony for Him rather than people be offended in Christ just because of my actions.

So we have two sections here that seemingly do not go together but they do. We have the crucifixion - taking up our cross and following Christ, involves denying ourselves and following after him with his death very real and alive every day of our lives. Denying ourselves so that we can render and give sacrificially to that which is due and to people to whom it is due, so that the Lord's name will be glorified, and it will not be condemned.

Let's close with prayer.