

## Matthew 17:14-27 – Jesus is the Resurrection

### Section 1: 17:14-20 - Progressive Faith

Have you ever come across a stagnant pond? How did it look? Refreshing? Probably not. Stagnant water typically looks gross and dirty. Lakes, rivers and creeks with moving water look very different. It typically looks refreshing and clean. Our faith should be like a body of water that is flowing. God's Word flowing into our life (changing us) and then God's Word flowing out.

Faith should be progressive. Our faith should always be growing. Stagnant faith is dying faith. The disciples struggled with stagnant faith. They rarely took advantage of the opportunities for their faith to grow. For example: feeding the 5,000, feeding the 4,000, Peter walking on water, Jesus calming the storm, being sent out, casting out demons, raising the dead. Time and time again when Jesus did something amazing the disciples were in awe, but not the good kind of awe. They had the "confused" kind of awe. They failed to learn that Jesus was capable of so much. They weren't allowing their faith to build.

In this passage of Scripture, we see the disciples running into another "lack of faith" situation. A man has a child with a demon. The disciples are unable to cast out the demon. This was a desperate situation for the father. The demon appears to be trying to kill the child. Throwing him into seizures that would cause him to fall into fires and water. The man finally gets to Jesus. And in middle of the chaos, Jesus rebukes. Who and why does He rebuke? Jesus rebukes the crowd and disciples...calling them an unbelieving and perverse generation.

Following the rebuke, we have two responses. (1) The father asks for help with his unbelief (Mark 9:24) and (2) the disciples respond with a question. The father has the right response. He asks Jesus to help his unbelief. The disciples on the other hand, seem to miss it again. They are more concerned with why they couldn't cast out the demon rather than Jesus' rebuke.

The disciples (probably a little embarrassed) pull Jesus aside privately to ask why they couldn't cast out the demons. Their faith wasn't non-existent but Jesus explains that their faith was little. Based upon the mustard seed illustration it's not like they needed massive faith either. So, why did the disciples fail if they only needed little faith? Mark 9:29 gives us a clear picture as to why they failed:

***29 And He told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer." (CSB)***

They relied upon their own strength, rather than on God's strength. How? They tried to cast out demons with their own power, forgetting they needed God to work through them. We will always fail when we try to live for God's glory on our own power. Believing we can accomplish anything in our own power is one of our greatest enemies.

### Application

So, what kind of faith do we need? I believe we need progressive faith. Faith that is continuously growing. Growing faith reminds us about how much we need to rely upon Christ. Therefore, as our faith is growing, we are able to walk in the Spirit and more fully glorify God with our lives. Prepare yourself, because during our sanctification process you will battle unbelief. Unbelief can manifest itself in many different forms and fashions. For example: you may face situations where you are tempted to trust your emotions over God's Word. That is a form of unbelief because you, in that moment, believe your emotions will fulfill you more than God's Word. Or you may fall victim to the idea that your sin is not that bad. Which is a form of unbelief because it goes against the truth of Scripture. If you battle unbelief from time to time...take heart...we all do.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How would you describe your faith...as a stagnant pond or a flowing stream? Why?
- ❖ How do you respond to rebuke...do you ignore and focus on yourself or do you seek to change?

- ❖ Why is it so hard to be corrected?
- ❖ How often do you rely upon your own strength rather than the power of God?
- ❖ How can we prepare ourselves to battle unbelief?

## Section 2: 17:22-23 - Jesus is the Resurrection

Jesus plainly speaks to the disciples at this point. He explains that He will be betrayed, killed and resurrected on the third day. While this is great news, it deeply distressed the disciples. Why? Simply put, they didn't understand that it was necessary for Jesus to die on their behalf.

Knowledge and understanding are important. The disciples had a difficult time understanding that Jesus had to die for them to have life. I'm sure the disciples had their own ideas about how Jesus' story would climax. But we must remember that our plans are never as good as God's plan. No doubt the disciples probably had wonderful plans for Jesus and His ministry. But as much as they desired great things for Jesus, God's plan is unchangeable, unstoppable and far better than anything we could imagine.

### Application

We would do well to memorize Isaiah 55:8-9:

*<sup>8</sup> "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the Lord's declaration. <sup>9</sup> "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (CSB)*

We have to ask ourselves: "Who knows best? Me or God?" Trust can be difficult. Trust is actually a learned characteristic. By that, I mean that we must practice trust in order to get better at trusting. Therefore, we must trust God little by little, so that when the moment comes, we can trust Him greatly.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How desperately are you trying to know and understand God?
- ❖ What resources can we use to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God?
- ❖ Do you trust God? Do you have moments that you question God?
- ❖ How are you currently building your trust?

## Section 3: 17:24-27 - The Sons are Free

This is an odd event in the gospel story. What was the temple tax? The temple tax was used to maintain the temple and fund the worship services. Money was necessary for worship to take place during the days of the temple. People had to buy cattle, sheep and doves for sacrifice. There were temple workers that had to be paid. Now, the Israelites had turned the temple into a market place to make a lot of money off the people. More than needed. We saw that when Jesus cleansed the temple.

Jesus gives us a very interesting statement, "*the sons are free*". I believe that Jesus is speaking of the freedom that comes from the gospel. Jesus is bringing the gospel to His people so that they may worship God freely. Free from sacrifice, free from the guilt and shame of sin, free from the penalty of sin, free from location limitations. Jesus speaks of the freedom of worship to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:21-24:

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth." (CSB)*

When you become a child of God, you are free. Free to worship, free to serve, free to love, free to have faith, free to share the gospel, free from the bondage of sin, free to live for His glory! The gospel frees us from having to earn God's approval. Which we could never do anyway. I want you to consider this truth for just a moment: through the gospel you are free from having to earn the love and grace of God. The gospel is amazing news because we don't have to meet a standard to receive it.

How do we use our freedom? To love God and love others. Jesus was free to not pay the temple tax. After all the temple was for Him. But Jesus paid the tax to not cause them to stumble. We have freedoms in Christ. But we should not use our freedoms to offend others, specifically over trivial matters. What are trivial matters? Tattoos, hair style, drinking in moderation, modest dress, political affiliation, and the like. We should never use those trivial things to push people from Christ. Paul gives us a clear picture of what we should value 1 Corinthians 9:22-23:

*<sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. <sup>23</sup>Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.*

What should we value? Getting the gospel to all people, making disciples and glorifying God.

### **Application**

It's easy to lose focus. To forget what this life is all about. All of the universe is centered around God. This life is not about your happiness here on earth. This life is not about you becoming great in the eyes of man. This life is about us desperately seeking to glorify God with our whole being: mind, body and spirit.

### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ Have you been set free from the bondage of sin?
- ❖ How are you using your freedom in Christ?