

**“Questioning Faith”**

**Matthew 17:14-27**

**May 12, 2021**

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I. **INTRODUCTION:** "Questioning faith" in these verses refers to 3 questions we ask ourselves along with "the Twelve" (Jesus' hand-picked apostles) when our faith seems to fail. We have some faith, but these verses show that often our faith is a *defective* faith rather than an *effective* faith. In answering these 3 questions, we discover 3 defects of faith that were present then and are still present now.

II. **BODY**

**A. Why could they not cast this demon out? (17:14-21)**

1. The context (vv. 14-18)
  - a. Jesus and 3 disciples (Peter, James, and John)
  - b. A man and 3 things (he came, knelt, and said)
  - c. A boy and 3 reasons (epileptic, suffering, disciples' inability)
  - d. Jesus and 3 replies (answered, rebuked, healed)
  
2. The content
  - a. The question: "Why could we not cast it out?" (v.19)
  - b. The answer: **POOR** faith, not *more* faith)
    - 1) Poor in quality, not quantity (v. 20; cf. Luke 17:5-6)
    - 2) Poor in sincerity, not severity (v. 21) The textual problem.
  
  3. The contact with our lives today
    - a. Investigate (the objective basis of our faith)
    - b. Meditate (on the subjective grasp of our faith)
    - c. Supplicate (i.e., pray; cf. Mt. 17:20 and Mk. 9:29)

**B. Why were they greatly distressed? 17:22-23)**

1. The context (v. 22): Gathering in Galilee for final journey to Jerusalem (cf. 19:2)

2. The content (vv. 22-23)
  - a. The question: Why were they "greatly distressed"?
  - b. The answer: **PARTIAL** faith (delivered, killed, **raised on the 3rd day**)
  
3. The contact with our lives today
  - a. Count the cost of following Christ (Mt. 16:21-26)
  - b. Believe the implausible (raised) as well as the plausible (delivered, killed)

#### **C. Why did they pay the temple tax? (17:24-27)**

1. The context (vv. 24-25): Capernaum, collectors, Peter's answer, Jesus' questions
  
2. The content (vv. 26-27): Q = Why (motive); A = **PROUD** faith (offensive faith)
  
3. The contact with our lives today
  - a. For the gospel ministry, don't cause offense (cf. 1 Cor. 9:112; 2 Cor. 6:3)
  - b. Trust that the Jesus of *that* fish can supply all your needs

**III. CONCLUSION:** Faith is the fuel of the kingdom of heaven, and poor, partial, and proud faiths will not work.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. (17:1-13) Have you ever had a "mountaintop experience" in your spiritual life and then stumbled spiritually when you came back down to the valley below?

2. (17:14-18) Did this boy have a disease (17:15; cf. 4:23-24) or a demon (17:18) or both? How would you explain your answer to your 20-year-old child or grandchild?

3. (17:14-20) How would you explain in your own words why the 9 disciples, who did not accompany Jesus to the mountaintop, could not cast out the demon in that boy?

4. (17:21) Do you understand why this verse has been omitted from modern translations like the ESV, NIV, and RSV? If not, whom will you ask about it, so that your confidence in the Bible is not weakened?

5. (17:22-23) Why do you think that the disciples did not extend their faith in Jesus' statement to include the resurrection on the third day? Can you think of an area of your life where your faith has been falling short?

6. (17:24-27) After helping Peter see that he was exempt from paying the temple tax, why do you think Jesus instructed Peter to go ahead and pay it for both of them anyway? Does Paul's expression of the same principle make you think of an area of your life in which you also need to absorb slander for the sake of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 6:3)?

7. (17:14-27) Which of the 3 kinds of defective faith in these verses most resonates with you, and what will you do about it this week to change it to the effective faith Jesus commends?