

# Matthew 17:14-21

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Preacher: Ray Kelly

[ 0 : 00 ] So, Matthew's Gospel. Now I will freely admit before we read it and before we study it, that I was greatly exercised with this study. It's a difficult passage. It doesn't at first reading appear like a difficult passage.

But it is a passage from which you will find an awful lot of error comes, an awful lot of condemnation for people because they don't feel that they match up to the levels of faith that are expected of them.

It's a passage where people get a completely wrong focus on what Jesus was talking about. It's also a passage where if you listen to a load of different Bible teachers, they all come up with different conclusions and they're all certain that they haven't fully understood it.

So, you can't even plagiarise this one because nobody commits themselves. Now I am going to commit myself to some things this morning, but it's very important that you realise that that's the background, that what you get from me is the best I could do.

And there's probably a lot more depth to it than we've yet plumbed. And therefore, feel free to plumb some more depth yourself. But also, if you come up with a different idea from me, talk to me about it afterwards.

[ 1 : 20 ] So, Matthew 17, we've done as far as verse 13, which dealt with the transfiguration. And we saw this incredible time on the mountain of glory.

I'm going to call it that. It's the Mount of Transfiguration. But the contrast between that and what we're going to do this morning is an important one. They were on the mountain of glory. They saw the glorified Christ.

Their minds were blown. They didn't know what to do. Peter became effectively a gibbering idiot and suggested all sorts of things that weren't appropriate. And they didn't really get it.

And even when he spoke to them about his own destiny to be crucified, he was going to be killed and he was going to raise from the dead three days later. They were pondering in their hearts, what does he mean by being raised from the dead?

So there was a lot of confusion, but a breathtaking perception of Jesus on the Mount of Glory. And when they came down off the mountain of glory, they then went into the Valley of Despair.

[ 2 : 28 ] And so what we're reading about this morning is what happened in the Valley of Despair. And they came down there immediately after they perceived all this glory. And we had all those other conversations, didn't we, about the coming.

They met Elijah and Moses on the mountain and what that actually meant. And they had these questions about John the Baptist and whether he was Elijah or not.

And I'm not going to rehearse the answers to that again. But the one thing I will say is we referred back to Joe's previous study where he talked about God having middle knowledge.

So had they accepted the kingdom at that time, there was an option there for the kingdom to be established. God provided for a situation even though he knew they would reject him.

But you can't look back and say they were predestined to reject him because he provided for them to accept him. By putting the spirit and power of Elijah in John the Baptist.

[ 3 : 31 ] So we've seen God bring together lots of ends. And unless I do that study all over again and take another hour, I'm just going to limit it to that. And if you want to know more, go back and listen to the recording.

So we finished with the fact that Elijah will still come. They didn't accept Jesus. They didn't accept or listen to John the Baptist. And so according to the 70th week of Daniel, which is the prophecy that for the end times, Elijah will still come again.

And in Revelation 11, we read that we have the two witnesses, one of which has all the attractions and aspects of Elijah.

Enough of that for now. So they're now down in the valley. And this conversation between this conversation about Elijah, according to Mark's and Luke's accounts, and there are accounts of what we're about to read in Matthew.

There is a parallel account in Luke's and Mark's gospel. And you get little bits of nuggets of information from all three gospels. But this conversation happens after they're coming down the mountain.

[ 4 : 51 ] And I think it's from Mark's account we learn that this is the following day. So they spent the night up there with the Lord. Yes, I am a bit jealous. So the next day they're coming down the mountain.

And that's where this account continues. So we're going to begin reading at verse 14. When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before him and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and he is very ill, for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

I brought him to your disciples and they could not cure him. And Jesus answered and said, you unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out. So he didn't rebuke the boy, he rebuked the demon. And the demon came out of him and the boy was cured at once.

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, why could we not drive it out? And he said to them, because of the littleness of your faith.

[ 6 : 01 ] For truly, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you.

But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. And some of your versions might just say prayer. And if you've got a really old version, that verse might even be missing because it's not in the oldest of manuscripts.

And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, the son of man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him and he will be raised on the third day.

And they were deeply grieved. Now, the study this morning is actually finishing in verse 21, but it just seems silly not to read to the end of the section. So they get to the bottom of the mountain and there's this big crowd.

And according to Mark's account, some of this crowd were scribes. So when he went up the mountain, he was with all the disciples and he left nine of them. And he took Peter, James and John with him up the mountain.

[ 7 : 10 ]     Why he singled those out, who knows? But he did. So when he comes back, there isn't just nine people waiting for him, but there's a big crowd.

What we don't know, and there's a lot we don't know, is why far too much emphasis is placed in a wrong way on this scripture. There's a lot we don't know that many people who teach on this passage don't take account of.

We don't know whether because the word disciple simply means followers. So the crowd that was gathered was probably the nine. May have been other disciples that are tagged on in some way.

Obviously, not the chosen, not members of the chosen 12, but nevertheless, people who may well have been believers or interested parties.

You've probably also got, and of course, this is not recorded in scripture. So this is just the bit we don't know. Could have been crowds of people who simply wanted their sick relatives healed.

[ 8 : 11 ]     And they heard where Jesus was and were waiting for him to pounce upon him to say, heal my kids or heal my wife or whatever. Which, of course, the man who came to Jesus was one of those anyway.

He brought his demon-possessed son for Jesus to deal with. And there were also the scribes. And with the scribes, there were probably some hangers-on as well, who were the legalistic bunch, who were wanting to see Jesus got rid of, quietened down, shut up.

Just, they wanted to see a religious victory over this preacher who annoyed them and continually challenged their legalism.

So it's even possible that this meeting with the demonized boy was set up. Now, it's not recorded as such, but it could have been. They've done this to him before.

And then you've got this father who, as we read in the other accounts, he had a son that was demonized and it was his only son.

[ 9 : 21 ]     So the only son of the father is talking with the father of an only son. And so you can see the reason for empathy there.

But in addition, this boy, we learned from the other accounts that he was, well, from the conflation of all three accounts, we learned that he was demon-possessed, dumb, deaf, blind.

And that when this demon attacked him, it threw him all over the place. It tore at his flesh. It tore at his body. It cast him into water to try and drown him. It cast him into fire to try and kill him through fire.

This thing was violent. Now, the one thing that that's likely to produce, and I believe this is significant later in the talk, the one thing that that's likely to produce in anybody that tries to minister to that boy is fear.

And if you remember, when Jesus dealt with the demoniac at Gadara, they were terrified of this demoniac because everywhere he went, he committed acts of violence.

[ 10 : 35 ]     He ripped the chains off his own body because he had that incredible strength. And so there was something fear-provoking about the demonic manifestations in that person.

And I would suggest to you that the same is obviously true here, that there's an element. If you just approach this in the flesh without some revelation from God as to how to deal with it, you're going to be scared.

Now, I supply that as a possibility. The scripture doesn't actually say that, but it's a fair assumption, I believe. And the hubbub that Jesus walks into seems to be right in the centre of all this kerfuffle about the man with the demonised boy.

And this man, you can tell from the way it's phrased, and Matthew almost seems to make light of it. Mark and Luke, you put their accounts together. You get this impression of a man who must have been desperate.

And so his approach to Jesus wasn't offhand in any way. It was, my son, my only son. Please, would you heal him if you can? Of course, Jesus says, what do you mean if?

[ 11 : 49 ] But the desperation in the man, and there are times when people in this room have felt that level of desperation, when we either have a close friend or a relative, and it can be as simple as we need them to come to Christ and they won't, or it can be as severe, on the other hand, of awful, besetting illness that gives them pain and suffering for the whole of their lives, and you're just beside yourself and you don't know what to do.

It's not an uncommon experience, although this particular boy, his condition was more serious than many, should we say. And I'm just going to read, we've just read Matthew, when they came to the crowd, the man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before him, saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic.

The word lunatic, if you look at the Greek, it's the word moonstruck, and moonstruck is where we get our word lunatic.

It means you're not in your right mind. In fact, they would use it to refer to people who were mad or demon-possessed. And he's very ill, for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

Mark says this, and he asked them, what are you discussing with them? So the disciples are discussing something with the scribes, and Jesus walks in and says, what are you all talking about?

[ 13 : 25 ] And one of the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out.

I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it. Luke says this, So the desperation of the situation.

Having been in some situations where there is a level of desperation, and having seen men step out in so-called faith, and command them to be healed in Jesus' name, the usual outcome is, when they're not healed, the person who's sick gets the blame for not having enough faith.

Jesus, in this passage, doesn't indicate that what he says is, the disciples didn't have enough faith. And we'll return to that concept in a minute.

But the first point I'd like to make is, it is rarely and possibly never the case that if someone doesn't get healed, it's their own fault because they didn't have enough faith.

[ 15 : 01 ] I'm not saying it's impossible. There could be situations where God wants someone to reach out in faith to him, and they don't, so they don't get healed. But for the most part, it's not the sick or dying person's fault that they don't get healed.

It's not that they couldn't drum up enough faith. And I'm departing from my notes on purpose, because when I wrote my notes, and I've since had several other things that have gone through my head that I mustn't miss out.

Faith. Above all else, if you read the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, what you'll find is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness.

But actually, the word isn't faithfulness, it's faith. It's the word pistis. It's a single word. And it's just faith. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit.

Now, faithfulness comes from having faith, I suppose. But it's the gift of faith that is a fruit of the Spirit.

[ 16 : 09 ] Now, one thing you will notice when you look at anything that grows fruit, if you look at an apple tree or an orange tree or whatever it is, you don't see it in the garden going, oh, I'm going to produce that apple.

Oh, if I just strain a bit more, I can produce an apple. No, it produces apples because it's an apple tree. You produce faith because faith has been sown in you, to each of us has been given the measure of faith.

So nobody is devoid of faith. They can refuse to act faithfully. But none of us is devoid of faith.

And so later on, when he challenges the disciples, he didn't say you've got no faith. What he said is your faith is small. But then he says, if you've got faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, you can shift mountains.

And the mustard seed was the smallest known seed at the time. So it's a slightly confusing thing. If you add, your faith is too little. Was he saying your faith is even smaller than a mustard seed?

[ 17 : 22 ] Or was he saying you've got the faith thing all wrong? And we'll explore that a bit more in a moment. So these disciples have been besought, heal the boy, and they couldn't do it.

And so Jesus steps in and does it. In all three accounts, you see, they say to him, he heals the boy, and that seems to be fairly straightforward. Although even in the presence of Jesus, this boy is thrown to the ground.

If you read all four accounts, he's thrown to the ground. And people think he's dead. And Jesus lifts him up and puts him to one side and gives him some recovery time.

But he is healed of the demon possession and all the illnesses. His sight returns. His speech returns. He's in his right mind.

There's no demon possession anymore. He's not having seizures. It's all sorted. But there is a battle that goes on, and this boy still is thrown to the ground violently when the spirit leaves him.

[ 18 : 26 ] But Jesus, as he approaches this, he calls them a perverse generation and a faithless generation.

So faithless, what's used there is a Greek word, apistos. And when you have the prefix a or a in Greek, it's a negative.

So pistos would be faithful, apistos, no faith. It's, if you like, a negative noun. It's basically saying you're an unbelieving bunch of people. Now, we mustn't forget that this is the same bunch of people, at least nine of them were, that had been sent out.

But, and they reported, if you looked at Matthew chapter 10, when they were sent out, they were sent out and told they could cast out demons and heal the sick and raise the dead and do all the things that Jesus did.

And here they are, faced with this, and they can't do anything. So what do we infer from that? Well, there could be several possibilities. And the reason this is such a difficult passage to get your head around is you're always faced with several possibilities.

[ 19 : 38 ] One is, that since that time, they've neglected their faith and therefore they come to this new emergency and they're not ready for it.

Another is this, when Jesus sent out the 12, he commissioned them to do what they did. He sent them out, they went and did what they did and they came back and said, Lord, even the demons were subject to us in your name.

But this was a different occasion. Had they been commissioned to deliver this boy? It's a question. A question I choose not to answer, lest I incriminate myself.

And then he called them a perverted generation, those who distort or misinterpret. Were they trying to exercise a distorted version of faith and therefore not succeeding?

The answer is, I haven't a clue. But what we mustn't lose sight of before we jump to any conclusion is that all these are possibilities from the text.

[ 20 : 42 ] And the reason I labour this is because the immediate conclusion that many come to is that because we are followers of Jesus, we automatically have authority over sickness and demons and death.

And we can automatically wield this like a big axe and we can heal people. And I have had my own church meetings, not here but elsewhere. I'll use the word, trying to be kind to the well-intentioned man that did it, but it was, somebody had a really bad back and the man said, well I've got the gift of healing so I'm going to pray for you and you're going to be healed today.

And he prayed and she wasn't. Now the immediate recourse is often to blame the person for not having the faith to get healed. But in fact what that man did was tantamount to a false prophecy.

He said the word of the Lord to you is you're going to be healed today and she wasn't healed. So when he, in inverted commas, stepped out in faith, was that faith?

I'm going to suggest it wasn't and I'll deal with why I think it wasn't in a moment. But that wasn't faith because if it was faith it would have produced a healing. It was well-intentioned.

[ 21 : 59 ] He didn't intend to do any harm. What he did was he raised her hopes and then her hopes were dashed. And that, that's not a good thing to do and it is avoidable.

And that's what I want us to go away with today is that we stay it's so difficult. We stay in the realms of what we know.

And I don't mean what we know generally. I mean what we know in the moment. Because there are times and I can indicate to you from my own testimony occasions when I've been cornered and the Lord has spoken to me and I've been able to say in faith.

Now, one occasion Sharon and I went to what was then a mental hospital. It was an institution in the Mendips where a friend of ours had been sectioned because she was having terrible mental health issues.

And we wanted her out of there as soon as possible. We wanted her back in the church because we could care for her far better than they could. And before we went in we prayed, Lord, what we don't want today, Lord, is demonic manifestations because that will just make them keep her in.

[ 23 : 15 ] What we want, if there's any demonic presence, we really want to get onto it quickly and that was the nature of the prayer. We don't want any kind of takeover bid making life worse for this lady.

And so we're in the hospital talking to her and she starts manifesting something. And I had absolutely no doubt that when I spoke that thing would shut up.

But that doesn't give me a deliverance ministry. And that's the important distinction. In the moment, I didn't do it based on Oh, I've got to produce this fruit.

I did it based on the fact that the Lord spoke to my heart and said, tell it to shut up. And I did and it shut up. But what you can't then do is treat that as a formula for everything.

If I could, I would be in the hospital clearing out every sick person. If I could apply that as a formula and speak over sick people and they get well, I'd be up the hospital.

[ 24 : 23 ] God has not sent me to the hospital and he hasn't given me the gift to go in there. And if I did go in there and people did get healed, who would get the glory for that? Not God.

Ray would get the glory for that. And we read in Scripture, God does not share his glory with another. So that would be the fastest way to my own grave.

Because God would take me out of the way because I was getting in the way of his glory. So these things are always ministered in a way that brings glory to God.

So I'm going to suggest that whatever these disciples were doing, and we're not sure what they were doing, had they succeeded, it would not have brought glory to God. That's my inference.

You may agree or disagree as you see fit. So he said you've got little faith. We have faith in Jesus for our salvation.

[ 25 : 22 ] There was a day when we didn't know him, and then we came to know him, and therefore our faith for salvation was based on new knowledge. Not evidence in the sense that you couldn't produce a box with it in and say, here's the evidence for my salvation.

the evidence was in here, but you knew that you knew that you knew that you knew that you'd had an encounter with Jesus, and that transformed your life from then on.

And the initial days of that walk may have been chaotic and confused and everything else, and it might have taken years to settle down, but that day when you met the Lord is an undeniable day.

And so your expression of faith came from certainty, and I want to introduce this, and I can't stick with my notes on this because it's emotive, and the notes are too confining, but when we gave our lives to Christ, it was because we'd become certain of something.

The Greek word for hope, *epo*, it doesn't intend, that word does not intend to confer doubt or uncertainty.

[ 26 : 45 ] It's used to express hope as something that is placed in a future certainty. So our hope of heaven isn't, gosh, I hope this is all true and I hope we make it.

Our hope in heaven is, I am absolutely certain that one day I will be in heaven, and my hope is I look forward to that day. It's yet future, but in here it's settled.

I would suggest to you that these disciples faced with this demoniac were not able to see with certainty the future outcome for this man.

So when he said your faith is too little, he's saying you don't know what the outcome is for this. you haven't settled this.

It's not that you've got no faith. What you've not done is you've not applied faith in the way the Bible says you should. He then says this kind only comes out by prayer or prayer and fasting.

[ 27 : 52 ] It doesn't matter whether that bit is in brackets in most of your versions that says this wasn't in the oldest manuscripts. It's in Mark's Gospel as well. Or is it Luke? I can't remember.

But it's in one of the others as well. So the principle is in there. We need to pray. What he's really saying to these disciples is you haven't prayed.

This kind only comes out by prayer. So obviously you haven't prayed. What does that mean? Oh Lord help me. I'm stuck. I guess I don't know what to do.

I suggest not. I suggest what that means is this man needs to be surrounded by people who persist in prayer until they get somewhere. Prayer is not an offhand solution.

That's not to say that you can't send up what often people call arrow prayers when you're in a pickle. Lord help, I'm stuck. There's nothing wrong with that.

[ 28 : 51 ] But when you're dealing with deep-rooted demonic possession, the chances are you need to labour in prayer to find out what the Lord wants to do and how he wants to do it. And in prayer you finish up doing what they did anyway, which is you bring the kid to Jesus.

Because he said, oh, what a frustrating generation you are, wicked and perverse, bring the boy to me. When we get into prayer, we bring the boy to him. And when there's a result, however long that takes, I think it was George Muller that was praying for five of his friends, praying for all five of them to come to Christ.

And the first one came to Christ after five years of praying. Three more of them came to Christ over the next 30 years. The one remaining one he had prayed for for 52 years and he died and about a month later the man came to Christ.

But this is like the midnight visitor, isn't it? I can't remember where that is. I've gone so far from my notes, now I'm lost.

But the midnight visitor comes to and knocks on the door and says, can I have some bread? I've got a guest that needs feeding at midnight. And initially the bloke says, go away, I'm sleeping.

[ 30 : 18 ] I don't want to be doing this at this time of night. But because of the persistence of the midnight visitor, eventually the chap gets out of bed and gives him food to take for his visitor.

And the Lord uses that as an analogy as to how we should be in prayer, that we never stop, which kind of explains these really awkward verses that we wish weren't there, like pray at all times in the spirit and pray without ceasing.

And you think, how do I do that? I'm going to make what I hope is a useful suggestion, which is to change your view of prayer.

Most of us have as a view of prayer, what we do is we have this time where we sometimes kneel down, sometimes not, but we shut our eyes and we give the Lord his 10 minutes or his 20 minutes or half an hour or whatever it is, and that's our prayer time.

And it sounds quite righteous, but would we deal with our earthly fathers that way? I used to have never-ending conversations with my earthly father when I was little, and I would ask him all those questions, how high is the sky, how deep is the sea, and all of those crazy things that kids ask, but I didn't say, Father, can we have 10 minutes?

[ 31 : 46 ] We had a discourse, and I think that discourse is prayer, and I may be just justifying my own inadequacy in prayer, but my prayer, more often than not, is on the hoof, and it never stops.

I'm aware of the Lord when I wake up in the morning, and I'm tossing things around with him all day long, and yet there will be those times when I stop and I say, Lord, I'm really not getting to the bottom of this, I need to change it up a bit, I need to put in more effort in prayer to get from you what I need to get from you, but prayer has ceased to be this thing that I only do in selected minutes because he's my father, and I talk to him all the time, and talking to God is prayer, and I hope that helps.

Now when you start getting into deliverance ministry, you are on dangerous ground. Just turn to Acts 19 a moment, and we're going to read verses 11 to 20, right, Acts 19 and verses 11 to 20.

God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hand of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out, but also some of the Jewish exorcists who went from place to place attempted to name over those who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.

Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this, and the evil spirit answered and said to them, I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?



[ 33 : 44 ] And the man in whom was the evil spirit leapt on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks who lived at Ephesus, and fear fell upon them, and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.

If you mess with deliverance ministry when you've not been called to do it, you are not acting in faith, you are playing Russian roulette with demonic powers.

demons. And so when you start commanding demons to flee, you need to know that God has told you to do that. That case, that one case when we were in that hospital, God gave us the authority to do it.

I can't immediately think of another occasion when that has happened for me. It's not something that happens every day. So when you come across ministers who are casting demons out of everyone, the spirit of this and the spirit of that, casting demons out of lamp posts, you have to fear for them.

They're playing Russian roulette with powers they don't understand and we don't understand the power of the demonic, not in enough detail to have any confidence in dealing with them.

[ 35 : 09 ] So we deal with it only when the Lord puts us on the spot and says you deal with it. Other than that, what we do is pray. And our default position is to pray.

I'm learning as much from preaching this as I'm teaching to be honest. As I've already said, Isaiah 42 verse 8 and 48 verse 11, God does not share his glory with another.

But what we do read in Mark 16 and verse 17, do turn there. Jesus says to the disciples, these signs will accompany those who have believed.

In my name, they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will pick up serpents, if they drink any deadly poison it will not hurt them, and they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

So we seem to be in a conflict here. I don't think we are, but we seem to be in a conflict. On the one hand I'm saying you can't just go around doing this, you need to pray.

[ 36 : 12 ] But on the other hand Jesus said those who believe will do these things. So what's the link? What's the link between believers will do these things and yet the disciples couldn't do them on this occasion?

And the link for me is prayer. Lord what should I do? David understood this. This is not in the notes but if you go to 2 Samuel 5, 2 Samuel 5, I believe it's somewhere around about verse 12.

So what we see in verse 12, David realised, many of the versions will say David perceived, that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people.

David perceived that God has made him king. Not just that he is a king, but God has made him king. Now if anyone therefore should have been able to say, so God's made me king, so I can do what I like, I can't lose.

The sort of Old Testament equivalent of a minister who might say, well I got born again and the Bible says I can cast out demons so I'm going to go around casting out demons. But what does David actually do?

[ 37 : 33 ] What we read in verse 19 is, David inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I go up against the Philistines and will you give them into my hand? God said, yes, go, and God gave the Philistines into his hand.

too often what we do is we go rushing in there when God hasn't said what to do. David, perceiving God had made him king, sought the Lord.

He prayed. You may have gathered that the message I'm trying to put across is that prayer is far more important than deliverance and far more important than healing because out of persistent prayer, what is it we read in the book of James chapter 5, and I can't remember the verse, the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, the prayer of a righteous man achieves much.

It doesn't just say the prayer though, if you read it, it says the fervent prayer, so I, fervency to me speaks of persistence, the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

So, where am I going? I need to draw this to a close. We should not presume that Jesus wants us to do exactly as the disciples did.

[ 39 : 03 ] We read in scripture that he went back and he joined the eleven, and the eleven were set aside to get the church off the ground, and they had a very, very specific ministry. Now, I'm not preaching cessationism when I say this, I'm just saying that they had a special task that they weren't even yet ready to do because they couldn't cast this demon out.

That wouldn't come until Pentecost. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out and they became ready to deal with this kind of thing. I want to go on to this.

Hebrews eleven, turn to Hebrews eleven. We'll finish with this, and I warn you in advance when you get the notes. I've driven a horse and cart through my notes this morning, but I think we've actually dealt with what the Lord would have me deal with.

Hebrews eleven one. It says this, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith is the assurance.

It actually says faith is the substance. So hang on, faith is in here. When I have faith I'm not seeing something, yet it has substance. It's something that becomes real in the heart.

[ 40 : 19 ] And when it says the conviction of things not seen, the Greek text says the evidence of things not seen. So how can you have evidence of something that's not even seen?

It's a hard one to get your head around, isn't it? I used to be in the courts, I used to prosecute people, and I had to produce evidence, and it was like documents or things that evidenced the case against the person who was up in court.

I couldn't say, oh, my Lord, it's in here. The evidence is in here. And yet, the writer to Hebrew says, evidence of things not seen.

So for you, the evidence, and for me, the evidence of what I'm going to express my faith towards is in here. It's unseen. But what it goes on to say, and I promise I will finish with this, it goes on to say this.

It says, by faith we understand that the world were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. So this whole lot was made out of something that wasn't visible, and we know that in here.

[ 41 : 31 ] We can't prove it to anybody, and yet for yourself you know it, do you not? Then it goes on and says this, by faith, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Abel had sussed out that the offering that needed to be made to God was the offering he would bring. He brought an offering based on something that was in his heart, and he put that before the Lord as the offering that was appropriate, as opposed to his brother who just gave what he could lay his hands on.

One was prayerful, and was based on knowledge that was in here. Let's read on a little. Verse 5, By faith Enoch was taken up, so that he would not see death, and he was not found, because God took him up, for he obtained the witness, that before his being taken up, he was pleasing to God.

Somewhere along the line, Enoch knew he was right with God, and what we read there is his being taken up was because in his heart he knew, you couldn't see it, nobody else could see it, but he knew he was right in the sight of God, and therefore he was to be taken up.

The last example I'll use this morning is Abraham. Verse 6 says, And without faith it's impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and he is a rewarder of those who see him.

[ 43 : 09 ] By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness, which is according to faith.

Noah knew in his heart that the flood was coming, Noah knew in his heart that the earth had become irredeemable, Noah knew in his heart that he had to build a boat in his backyard, and that he'd be ridiculed for doing it.

And then one day faith became sight. And so my, I guess my finishing statement this morning is don't get condemned because you see the disciples, you see Jesus telling the disciples off because their faith was too small.

Because actually when you look at the context that's not exactly what he did. He was more saying your faith was too small for this because you didn't apply it right. That was more the message I would say there.

But let's pray. And let's make prayer when you pray you bring the problem to Jesus which is what they finished up doing.

[ 44 : 21 ] They brought the kid to Jesus and he delivered him. When you pray you bring the problem to Jesus. He might say go and cast out the demon. Or he might say wait there I'll go and cast out the demon.

Or he might say actually that person is not quite right for release yet. There are things I want to do in their life before I release them. And too often we operate according to the flesh and we don't stop and say Lord what do you want to do here?

Father thank you for this word. And I admit I found it a challenge and I'm not even sure if I've done it justice now. But Lord teach us to pray.

Let us be a people that walk in prayer. That pray without ceasing. That pray always in the spirit and that always seek to elevate you and put you in the glorious place you deserve to be placed in.

And Father if and there are sicknesses in this fellowship if there is any demon possession if there is any anything that just needs your attention Lord draw it to our attention so that we can commit it to prayer and Lord let us get beyond the sort of simple arrow prayers that oh yeah so and so wants that praying for we'll just pray it and then get on with our tea but Lord let us be a people of prayer and a people who will keep things on the burner before you until we see you move until we see you glorified and the people that will lift you up and magnify and glorify your name when there are results in Jesus name Amen