

Matthew

A Careful Study of Matthew

April 27, 2025

I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 17:14-21**, When they (*Jesus, Peter, James, John*) came (*down from the Mount of Transfiguration*) to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, [15] “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a **lunatic** (*someone influenced by the moon, often manifested by epileptic fits/convulsions*) and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. [16] I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.” [17] And Jesus answered and said (*to the father and the crowd*), “You unbelieving and perverted generation (*they corrupt the truth, their thinking, and their behavior*), how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” [18] And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. [19] Then the disciples (*other nine*) came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” [20] And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith (*not lack of faith/unbelief, but insufficient faith*); 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 to you. [21] But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
- B. Though this story contains a number of things to consider, today our primary focus will be faith in relation to the way it is used in this story – that is, faith for healing, for obtaining miracles from God, for casting out demons, and moving mountains (*an idiom for doing the impossible*). This focus comes with a number of challenges for several reasons:
1. **First**, it will be challenging because I do not want to use Christian cliches or promote unrealistic expectations.
 2. A **second** challenge is the probability that you will filter what we talk about today through your preconceived beliefs about faith for these things, and what is said may not neatly fit into your current beliefs.
 3. **Third**, this will be challenging because God’s word does not present this faith as a one size fits all. It does not clearly define the faith required for these things. And it does not provide step by step instructions that can be depended on to produce the sought for results.
 4. **Finally**, it is doubtful that I will be able to answer all your questions, but I do hope to at least move you closer to understanding and practicing this kind of faith as a normal part of your life.

C. Pray

II. Faith for healing, miracles, casting out demons, doing the impossible

A. **Matthew 17:14-21** talks about a kind of faith that is too little to accomplish the task at hand. It talks about faith the size of a mustard seed that can move mountains. It talks about faith that requires prayer and fasting to rise to the level required to bring about its intended results. It presents a faith that rebukes demons and commands things to be done. And it presents unbelief as a blockage to accomplishing what faith can.

1. All this is found in these eight verses. If we go outside these eight verses, we discover both similar and different ways faith for healing, for obtaining miracles, for casting out demons, and moving mountains is expressed and responded to by God. Therefore, my goal today is to introduce you to the various statements and examples of faith found in God's word – not to confuse you, but to introduce you to a broader base of information from God's word about this kind of faith.
2. In relation to faith for healing and other types of miracles, we can come to God in faith for ourselves or on behalf of someone else.
 - a. An example of seeking healing for yourself: **Matthew 9:22**, But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "**Daughter**, take courage; **your** faith has made you well." At once the woman was made well."
 - b. An example of an individual seeking healing for another: **Matthew 9:18**, While He was saying these things ..., a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, "**My daughter** has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live."
 - c. Two examples of a group seeking healing for an individual:
 - (1) **Matthew 9:2,6**, And **they** brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing **their** faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." [6] Then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home."
 - (2) **James 5:14-15**, Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the **elders** of the church and **they** are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; [15] and **the prayer offered in faith will restore** the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.
3. In relation to faith for healing and other types of miracles, some have great faith, some little faith, and some ask for help to believe. Where Jesus makes no comment about an individual's or a groups' faith, we can assume their faith is sufficient.

- a. An example of great faith: **Matthew 8:10,13**, Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such **great faith** with anyone in Israel. [13] And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed that very moment.
- b. An example of little faith: **Matthew 16:7-9**, [The disciples] began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “He said that because we did not bring any bread.” [8] But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of **little faith**, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? [9] Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up?”
- c. An example of asking for help in believing: **Mark 9:22-24**, “It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” [23] And Jesus said to him, “‘If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.” [24] Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “**I do believe; help (*aid, assist*) my unbelief.**”
4. In relation to faith for healing and other types of miracles, our faith is most often the deciding factor in what God will do.
 - a. The examples above demonstrate that the faith of those seeking God’s help is significant in receiving God’s help.
 - b. An example of how insufficient faith or outright unbelief on the part of people limits God’s response: **Matthew 13:58**, And [Jesus] did not do many miracles [in Nazareth] because of their unbelief.
5. In relation to faith for healing and other types of miracles, righteousness and earnestness are significant factors in gaining the asked for response from God.
 - a. **James 5:15-18**, The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. [16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The **effective** prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. [17] Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. [18] Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

6. In relation to faith for healing and other types of miracles, some take authority over whatever it is they are doing in faith, some ask God to act, and some God heals for His own reasons without being asked.
 - a. An example of taking authority over something in faith: **Matthew 10:1**, Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and **gave them authority over** unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
 - b. An example of commanding: **Acts 16:18**, She (*a demon possessed, fortune-telling slave girl*) continued [following Paul and saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."] for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "**I command you** in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.
 - c. An example of asking God in faith: **Matthew 9:27-30**, As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" [28] When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." [29] Then He touched their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith." [30] And their eyes were opened."
 - d. An example of God acting for His own reasons without being asked: **Luke 7:12-15**, Now as [Jesus] approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. [13] When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." [14] And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" [15] The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.
7. In relation to faith for healing and other types of miracles, doubt gets in the way of receiving what we want to accomplish by faith.
 - a. **Matthew 21:20-22**, Seeing [the withered fig tree], the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither all at once?" [21] And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you **have faith and do not doubt**, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. [22] And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

- b. In this example, Jesus presents the method of commanding and the method of asking in faith as the means to gaining what is desired, and He presents doubt as preventing it from happening.
 - c. To doubt is to waver, or be in a state of uncertainty, or to hesitate in proceeding to do what your faith is wanting to do.
 - 8. In spite of having sufficient faith to bring about healing or other miracles, you lose whatever spiritual standing with God your faith might have gained you if you do not have love, or you unrepentantly practice sin (*live a lawless life*).
 - a. Lack love: **1 Corinthians 13:2**, If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
 - b. Unrepentantly practicing sin: **Matthew 7:22-23**, “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ [23] And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”
 - 9. Faith, in any form or for any use can grow stronger.
 - a. **Romans 4:19-21**, Without becoming weak in faith [Abraham] contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; [20] yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but **grew strong in faith**, giving glory to God, [21] and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.
 - b. **2 Thessalonians 1:3**, We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your **faith is greatly enlarged**, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater. (**James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5**)
- B. We have looked at a number of examples from God’s word concerning faith for healing, for obtaining miracles from God, for casting out demons, and for moving mountains (*doing the impossible*). As stated earlier, my purpose is not to confuse you, but to expose you to these various examples of faith and to demonstrate that there seems to be no clear and exact definition of faith for these kinds of things, nor is there a single formula to follow, nor a step-by-step set of instructions. This raises some questions.
1. How does God measure our faith for these things? Does He measure it by the amount of faith we have in the moment of asking? If so, does that mean faith for healing is separate from faith for godly living?

2. Can we pump up faith for moments of need, or is faith for the need built on and strengthened by the faith we have for the rest of life? Is it possible to pump up sufficient faith for healing while living day by day in ways that demonstrate we lack faith for loving our spouse or children or neighbors or our enemies as we ought?
3. Is it our faith that gives God the power and ability to heal or work a miracle on our behalf, or does our faith put us in the kind of condition whereby God wants to respond accordingly?
4. If faith is like an invitation to God to use His power and ability on our behalf, is unbelief a form of telling God not to act on our behalf?
5. What is little faith? Is it insufficient faith? Is it a mixture of faith and doubt? If so, what is faith in the wrong thing, or faith used for wrong purposes?
6. What about faith the size of a mustard seed? What does it look like? Why does Jesus compare great, or even sufficient faith with faith the size of a mustard seed – which is very small?
7. Jesus seems to say that for some things, sufficient faith requires prayer and fasting – and I am assuming He means prayer and fasting prior to commanding or asking for a healing or other miracle. Therefore, what do prayer and fasting have to do with sufficient faith?
8. And finally, is the power to heal, cast out demons, and do the impossible in our faith, or is the power in God – which we experience because He has responded to our faith? If the power is in God, is this why Christians say, “In the name of Jesus...?”

III. Conclusion

- A. Possibly you see that there are challenges in defining and deciding what faith for healing and other miracles is, and in defining and deciding how we can have sufficient faith to command or ask for healing, for casting out a demon, or for securing some other thing that is needed to meet a God-approved need.
- B. God-willing, we will return to this subject next Sunday and carry on from here. In preparation, consider that faith is not a mustering of will or having the power to make life the way you want it. Faith is trusting in God, His will, His word, and living and speaking and praying accordingly.