

Research on: Healing of the Epileptic Boy

Matthew 17:14-21

“When our Lord went up to the mountain where he was transfigured, he left at the foot of it the multitudes, and nine of his apostles, he took only three with him. How long he stayed there no evangelist tells us. The multitude and his disciples stayed waiting for his coming, probably not far off; some of the scribes came to them, and they were arguing together. The day after our Lord, and Peter, James, and John, were come down from the mount, they go to the multitude, who received him with great passion, and saluted him. He begins to inquire what they were discoursing about; but was by and by interrupted with a certain man. . .” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Things had not gone well while Jesus and the three chief apostles were away on the mount. As during the absence of Moses at Sinai the people had fallen into idolatry ([Exodus 32.](#)), so now, when their Master and their leaders were withdrawn, the nine apostles had faltered in faith and failed in exercising the miraculous powers bestowed upon them” (Pulpit Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“The Transfiguration appears to have taken place at night. In the morning, as he came down from the hill on which it took place—with Peter, and James, and John—on approaching the other nine, he found them surrounded by a great multitude, and the scribes disputing or discussing with them. No doubt these cavilers were twitting the apostles of Jesus with their inability to cure the demoniac boy of whom we are presently to hear, and insinuating doubts even of their Master’s ability to do it” (Jamieson 3.172).

14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

“In great humility before Jesus, and with deep reverence for him. . .” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com)

“The word for ‘knelt’ (*gonypeteo*, used in the NT only here and at 27:29; Mark 1:40; 10:17) has no overtones of worship but suggests humility and entreaty” (EBC 8.390).

15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

“The word "Lord" here means "Sir," a title of civility, not implying divinity.

“My son: this was an only son according to Luke” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

““In Matthew, this Gospel writer calls the son a ‘lunatic’ i.e. epileptic because epileptics were supposed to be affected by the changes of the moon (luna)” (Dummelow 684).

“The other Gospels add some further touches. The boy had a “dumb spirit.” When the spirit seized him it “tore him,” and he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed with his teeth. Slowly, and as with difficulty, the paroxysm passed off, and the sufferer was wasting away under the violence of the attacks. The phenomena described are, it need hardly be said, those of epilepsy complicated with insanity, a combination common in all countries, and likely to be aggravated where the “seizure,” which the very word epilepsy implies, was the work of a supernatural power. A prolonged melancholy, an indescribable look of sadness, a sudden falling, and loss of consciousness, with or without convulsions, or passing into a tetanic stiffness, a periodical recurrence coinciding often with the new or full moon (hence probably the description of the boy as “lunatic”), grinding the teeth, foaming at the mouth, are all noted by medical writers as symptoms of the disease” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

““In Matthew, this Gospel writer calls the son a ‘lunatic’ i.e. epileptic because epileptics were supposed to be affected by the changes of the moon (luna)” (Dummelow 684).

“The question was not whether Jesus had the power to heal the boy but whether the father had faith to believe Jesus could – ‘everything is possible for him who believes’” (EBC 8.703).

Lunatic in Greek is *seleniazomai* which means “to be moon-struck or lunatic; to be epileptic; epilepsy being supposed to return and increase with the increase of the moon” (Strongs, www.blueletterbible.org).

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

“**They could not cure him.**—This, then, would seem to have been the subject-matter of debate. The scribes were taunting the disciples, who had probably trusted to their use of the wonted formula of their Master’s name, and were now wrangling in their own defense” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“*And I brought him to thy disciples....* To the nine, whilst Christ was with the other three upon the mountain: no doubt but his design was to bring him to Christ first; but he being absent, he applied to his disciples, and, desired them to make use of their power to heal him; and which they attempted, but without success:

“*and they could not cure him.* This he said, partly to show the malignity and stubbornness of the disease, and partly to accuse the disciples of weakness; (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

The word “faithless” in Greek is *apistos* and means “unfaithful, unbelieving, without trust (in God)” (Thayer 57).

“In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus answers and says, ‘O faithless and perverse generation!’ Perverse means that which is twisted or turned from the proper direction; and is often used of the eyes, when one or both are turned from the natural position. Applied to a generation, or race of men, it means that they hold opinions turned or perverted from the truth, and that they were wicked in their conduct.

“How long shall I suffer you? - That is, how long shall I bear with you? How long is it necessary to show such patience and forbearance with your unbelief and perversity? This was not so much an expression of impatience or complaint as a reproof for their being so slow to believe that he was the Messiah, notwithstanding his miracles” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

“**Rebuke** in Greek is *epitimaō* which means “to admonish or charge sharply” (Strong’s, www.blueletterbible.org).

“And Jesus rebuked the devil - The word “rebuke” has the combined force of reproof and commanding. He reproofed him for having afflicted the child, and he commanded him to come out of him. Mark Mar 9:25 has recorded the words which he used words implying reproof and command: “Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him.” And the spirit cried, and with a mighty convulsion came out, leaving the child apparently dead. Jesus lifted him up by the hand (Mark), and gave him to his father (Luke)” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“When the boy arrived, Jesus took firm action. He rebuked it. It was important to cure the boy, but it was also important to make it clear that evil in any form is to be opposed. Matthew concentrates on the simple fact that the boy was cured from that very hour. And the cure was instantaneous. The lack of any delay stresses Jesus’ mastery over demons and disease” (PNTC Matthew 447-448).

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

“**Apart**. Jesus had retired to a house (Mark) when the disciples came to him. The question which they desired to ask was one that could not be investigated in the presence of the sneering, unbelieving crowd.

Why could not we cast him out? They had keenly felt their impotence and failure, so publicly and distressingly displayed, especially as they had received power to eject demons, and had successfully exercised this authority ([Luke 10:17](#)). The Lord's rebuke (ver. 17) had passed over their heads, and not been understood as applicable to themselves. So it was with some bitterness that they asked the question” (Pulpit Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](#)).

“Namely, the nine disciples, who had been left with the multitude, when Jesus and the three others went up to the mount. They were silent before the multitude, ashamed, it seems, that they could not cast out this evil spirit, and, perhaps, vexed lest through some fault of their own they had lost the power of working miracles, formerly conferred upon them” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](#)).

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Unbelief in Greek is *apistia* which means “unfaithfulness, want of faith, weakness of faith” (Strong's, [www.blueletterbible.org](#)).

“Jesus told them in reply, that it was because of their unbelief that they had not been able to cast him out. They were appalled by the difficulty of the case, and the obstinacy of the disease.

Faith in Greek is *pistis* which means “conviction of the truth of anything; a belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things; the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ; a belief that Jesus is the Messiah through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God” (Strong's, [www.blueletterbible.org](#)).

“In order to work miracles of this kind, to cast out devils in cases so obstinate and dreadful as this, faith of the highest kind is necessary. That faith is produced and kept vigorous only by much prayer, and by such abstinence as fits the mind for the highest exercises of religion and leaves it free to hold communion with God” (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com](#)).

[Matt. 17:21](#)

21Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Fasting is *nesteia* in Greek and can mean “voluntary abstinence from food or voluntary religious exercise, the public fast prescribed by the Mosaic Law and kept yearly on the day of atonement where Jews fasted from their sins.

If prayer is drinking in what is real and true, then fasting might be denying what is not true.

My. 221:32-14

In the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we read that even the disciples of Jesus once failed mentally to cure by their faith and understanding a violent case of lunacy. And because of this Jesus rebuked them, saying: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me." When his disciples asked him why they could not heal that case, Jesus, the master Metaphysician, answered, "Because of your unbelief" (lack of *faith*); and then continued: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." Also he added: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (refraining from admitting the claims of the senses).

Testimonies of the healing of Epilepsy from the Christian Science periodicals (there are many, many healings of epilepsy in the periodicals. These are just a few.)

"Testimony of healing"

Isabel M. de Santiago

From the Christian Science Sentinel, Feb. 4, 1967

"Epilepsy Cured in Chicago"

Zoe S. Loveland

Christian Science Journal, July 1886

"Many Years ago..."

Susanne Becker

Christian Science Sentinel, April 25, 1988

"Testimony of Healing"

by Charles Somes

From The Christian Science Journal, December 1899

"Testimony of Healing"

by Frances Monnette

From the Christian Science Sentinel, October 24, 1908