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Math. 17, 14-21:

"O you of little faith, how long shall I put up with you?" No.1

Praise and thanks be to the Lord for the privilege of being here again to worship, to hear the Word, to edify, exhort and comfort one another. And whatever we need, God can give us. He wants to give us.

"If only we could believe, we would see the glory of God." That's what he said and we can believe it with all our hearts. It is really due to nothing other than our unbelief if God cannot reveal himself.

Everything that God will ever do, he has already done in Christ. It only needs to be manifested. That has become so great for us.

Just as God rested after the creation, and when his work was done, and everything was working, and has continued to do so to this day, so ***"the Lord, having accomplished redemption, sat down at the right hand of the majesty of God."***

He sat down, the work was done, and ***"He waits until all enemies are made his footstool."***

And we have sung it in this marvellous song.

*One will remain king when all things succumb.
One will live when all things die.
Jesus, the strong one, who conquers all things,
who acquires for us the inheritance in heaven.*

In the last stanza it says:

*Here is Emmanuel before his host,
who sustains the church to himself.
He, in the centre, as wall and defence,
remains also with us until the end of the world.
He is the same, yesterday and today,
yes, until eternity, mighty in battle.*

The spiritual battle did not just begin yesterday or today, but very early on, and it began in heaven and is carried out on earth and will end again in heaven, when according to the scripture, as it says in Revelation 20, ***"the church***

will be taken up and the great battle will be in heaven, and then Michael will catch the devil and throw him down."

That will be a beautiful day. I am not usually gloating, but on that day I laugh too. I believe the word will be fulfilled, ***"the mouth will be full of laughter, the tongue full of glory,"*** when the enemy of God, who is also our enemy, has finally been dealt with.

I too have greetings from many here and there. You all know, I had four weeks of rest. The first weekend I was there, I did 1040 km. On the second, I was here. In the meantime, the hail had given my car quite a few dents. And on the third, I did 1065 km. So you can imagine what the recovery brought me. But it was all worth it.

As you know, ***"the love of God constrains us."***

And Paul says, ***"Where would someone be in need, and I would not feel it with them? Where would someone be suffering, and I would not suffer with him?"***

Our bond with each other and with God makes us feel that we have to share joy and suffering with each other.

And I have rarely felt it as I have in the last few weeks, how intimate the fellowship among believers can become and how it is becoming even more heart-felt. And that has to get even better, much, much better.

I noticed a few things in the word that was read, in these verses, which we will not go into in detail because I want to read a psalm before we pray.

But what strikes us here is the fact that two inspirations can follow each other in such quick succession. I don't know whether in these verses, from verse 16 to 23, whether there are five minutes between them, it's impossible to say.

In one moment Peter is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and speaks the revelation of God clearly and distinctly.

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. [Mt 16:16]

The Lord confirms him and says:

Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [Mt 16:17]

And just very shortly, as I said, three, four, five minutes later, the same Peter takes the Lord aside and speaks to him.

It says here [Mt 16:22]:

Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.'

And as we have all read, it says of the Lord, ***"But he turned and said unto Peter...."***

The Lord seems to have left. And Peter followed him and spoke and spoke, and the Lord turns round and does not say, "Peter, out of my sight!" but he said:

"Out of my sight, Satan! Get thee behind me; thou art an offence unto me. For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

How close together can things be!

How shortly can they follow one another!

Everything is inspiration that is somehow connected with the kingdom of God.

But here, for the first time in my life, I notice the words, or terms, "snare", "offence", "stumbling block".

And if we just turn one page and read chapter 18, it says in verse 6:

6 "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

7 Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

So here it goes one step further.

Here the word 'offence' is also associated with the term 'seduction'.

The offences are the seductions, the false inspirations, that which is not according to the will and Word of God.

Woe to all those people who devote themselves to putting and throwing of fences and snares in the way of God's people through seduction.

And the Bible says ***"They are being deceived themselves and continue to deceive others."***

What are all these false teachings? They are false inspirations, they are spirits that take possession of people and speak through them.

But we also recognize how important it is to always speak biblically, even if it doesn't fit in with our concept.

This was the case with Peter. Peter believed that the Lord was the Messiah and that he would establish his kingdom. And he wanted him to stay and did not realize that God's kingdom is an eternal kingdom and that we cannot live forever as we are now, but will grow older and then die. So in order to establish an eternal kingdom, the Lord first had to give and bring eternal life to those who were to live with him eternally in his kingdom. But he was not yet able to overlook all this. It was still too fresh for him.

And he meant so well. And this meaning "well" was from Satan. And the Lord says, ***"Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art an offence unto me, for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's."***

In other words, what you have just explained here is not according to the will of God, but as one would think humanly. And then it happened. The Lord has made things clear and called them by name.

What most people don't understand at all is the last verse in chapter 16:

(28) Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

How many of you know what this means? Do you all remember it well?

Brother Branham said it very clearly. When the Lord revealed Himself to John on the Isle of Patmos, He came down as He will be when He begins His millennial reign. Hence this expression here of John who has part in the millennial reign.

I want to read it to you so that you know that it is written in Revelation 1. Revelation 1 verse 5:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

That's the one word. And then I look for a second one where it says, yes, I actually wanted to read verse 9:

I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Just as John saw our Lord there in all His glory, His face shining like the sun, in this experience so will the Lord be when He begins His reign. So this Word came true.

John was still alive and probably many more who were standing there, as our Lord said here, they were still alive when the Lord came down and revealed Himself to John on the isle of Patmos, as He will come down when He begins His reign as King.

Then there was another word that struck me in chapter 17. It says here in verse 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.'

You all know this story. There was a man who brought his son, a boy who was a lunatic. He brought him to his disciples and they could not heal him.

And then the Lord was angry in spirit, not at the unbelieving world, but angry with His own, who had been with Him for so long and had not yet been able to command this spirit to go out.

The Lord became angry. The context makes this clear. Verse 14 says:

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

and saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and so vexed; for oft times he falleth into the fire and oft into the water.

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

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.'

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

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

And Jesus said unto them, 'Because of your little faith. 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.'

This is a word that knocks us all to the ground and also lifts us up again.

The disciples had travelled a long way with the Lord, having just seen the glory. They were with John, James, and Peter on the mountain with the Lord. Perhaps it didn't happen because the three of them were not there; maybe they were the only ones with such great faith. But be that as it may, the others were also disciples. And the Lord says here, **"Because of your little faith you have not been able to cast out the Spirit."**

We must take this rebuke to heart.

And if the Lord came to us today and could speak to us audibly, and we could all see Him around us with our concerns and problems, with all our unhealed illnesses, unresolved problems, with everything that we carry with us, and He could speak to us as loudly and clearly as He did here at that time, then He would say very clearly, **"It was only because of your little faith,"** and nothing else, and nothing else at all.

And this little faith is closer to unbelief than to faith.

And that is the great trouble.

And I think the Lord is grieved with us, because we are of little faith, because we do not dare to take God at His word and see every promise fulfilled in full expectation as a reality before us in faith.

The Lord says here, **"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed..." "A mustard seed is very small,"** one of the smallest grains, as we have heard. I am not a gardener, but a mustard seed is certainly a small grain.

And the Lord says, **"If you have faith like a mustard seed, then speak and it will be done."**

We have dealt with this and emphasized often enough that the Lord wants to glorify Himself once again at the end of days and confirm His word.

Will He visibly come down from heaven and do something?

No, He will have to use you and me, your mouth and mine, your feet and mine, your hands and mine, your faith and mine. God has a body! The Lord has chosen a church, redeemed it to continue His work through it.

And when we read such words here, it goes through our marrow and bone.

We also see in what the Lord says to Peter, who had the revelation from God about Christ, **"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."** [Mt 16:19]

Now I really ask you tonight: If God has given us the same revelation of Jesus Christ by grace, has He not also given us the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

Has He not also given us divine authority?

Can the one be separated from the other?

Can we say, as we claim, ***"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to us, but the Father in heaven."***

Can we lay claim to the great revelation that God has given us, to the revelation of Jesus Christ, without having the second, namely the key to the kingdom of heaven?

If I have the key to the car, then I can drive.

If I have it to the room, then I can go in.

If I have it to the kingdom of heaven, then I have access, then I'm not standing outside, I can get in.

And this is the point that God must make very clear to us, that divine revelation is not a rational consideration, and that divine revelation is also associated with divine authority, and thus the ability to act in the kingdom of God, in the name of the Lord.

Not on our own behalf, not in our own name, but to act on God's behalf, in the name of the Lord.

Have we ever realized so clearly, that these two things belong together?

Also the word, ***"I say unto you, you are Peter, but not on you, but on this rock,"*** on this revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the rock.

What does 1 Corinthians 10 say, from verse 1 to verse 3? ***"Christ was already the rock that accompanied the people of Israel,"*** which Moses struck, from which the water came out, that is Christ, the rock.

Here it says:

(18) ... Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(19) And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

Divine authority in connection with the revelation of Jesus Christ.

"I will build my church, saith the Lord."

But the ministry is to be carried out by men of God who have received the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And we all need to be told that we cannot just remain hearers and listeners of the Word of God, but must one day also become doers of the word. [Jak 1:22]

There is no other way. We must face up to this divine task at all costs!

You know, I wanted to read that psalm. I certainly did not know that such a word from Matthew would be read here today.

I didn't read here before. I actually wanted to read Psalm 12. And now we are here with this powerful Word of God.

And the Lord wants to tell us tonight: What I meant and said then, I mean and say today.

And we can rely on it.

People who have received the divine revelation of Jesus Christ will experience the building up of the church and everything that God has promised the church we have access to.

After all, we are not outside the kingdom of God, but within it.

It is even written that ***"the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, but it is within you."*** [Lk 17:20]

Many think that because the Pharisees asked the Lord that he told them. By no means. There were more people there, not just Pharisees. It has always been a mixed company.

But the Lord addresses his own and wants to lay it deep in our hearts tonight:

Firstly, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the building up of the Lord's church, the divine authority and access to all things that must be in the kingdom of God and that belong to the kingdom of God.

Perhaps it is also in connection with this that we can understand why the Lord said, ***"Before the end, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached."*** [Mt 24:14]

This is the only place where the gospel is connected with the kingdom.

Otherwise, it is the gospel of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, or as Paul says, ***"My gospel."*** Always gospel.

But here, the gospel of the kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom. And that's what it's all about:

The kingdom of God. The church of God. The fulfillment of all the promises that belong to the kingdom of God.

And we are, thank God, in it and we lay claim to everything that the Lord has promised us.

And then, of course, we must also be careful that we do not cause offense and that we not say or teach anything that causes people to stumble and fall.

I have already told you this evening, and I wrote it in a circular letter, how much is being claimed that the Lord is coming this year and how July in particular is being emphasized. And July is over, as far as I know.

And I have also heard this so clearly once again, how this sister has just fallen prey to the devil through dear brothers who only smile. And if we saw the enemy, don't think he would make a grim face, because then we would all be frightened.

No, he brings the things with a smile.

And this dear sister believed that the Lord would come in July.

And she said, "I am not ready. I have been pretending, I'll stay behind and the others will be raptured. I can't bear that."

People are brought into such inner distress.

And what does Paul write to the Galatians? ***He that troubles you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.*** [Gal 5:10]

People who lead astray those who have become believers, who become an offense and snare to them, I tell you today on the basis of the Word of God, they will have to answer for every soul on that day.

And that is why we attach such great importance to the pure proclamation of the Word of God.

And when Paul wrote at that time, ***"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."***

They are to judge the matter.

But whoever offends or seduces one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him if a millstone had been hung around his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. [Mt 18:6]

I sometimes think with great pain and deep sorrow, who will have to answer for all the murdered souls, for all the poisoned souls on that day. For such a

person it would truly be better if he had never lived. It would have been better if such a person had never been born.

For one soul, we read it here, ***"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul."*** [Mt 16:26]

How many people have suffered damage to their souls!

Oh, that we could hold our tongues and only speak when God has spoken and otherwise prefer to talk about the weather or whatever interests us.

Often it really would be better for believers to talk about worldly things if they are not ordained by God to talk about spiritual things and to say doctrinally what God has really said.

As it is written, ***"Be not many teachers."*** [Jam 3:1]

First you must have been taught by God.

And so it is written, ***"They will all be taught by God."*** [Jn 6:45]

Woe to the world, because of offenses. Surely the deceptions must come. [Mt 18:7]

Imagine, they must come. It belongs to the end times. And the Lord says shortly after that, in chapter 24, verse 24, ***"If it were possible, even the elect would be deceived."***

Offenses, deceptions, stumbling blocks, everything must come.

And did not the people take offense at the Lord, take offense at His speech and leave Him?

Many also took offense at the words of the Lord in our time. They were not prepared to submit to God.

And who submits to God? Whoever submits to His word.

Only God is above His word. Everything else is below His word. You and I and all of us have to submit to His word. He alone is above His word.

He watches over it, so that it is fulfilled.

Everyone else is under the Word of God.

There is not one who could rise up.

And the one who rises up, the Bible says, that ***"he will exalt himself and think that he is God and sit in the temple."*** [2Th 2:4]

In the past few weeks I have read a lot in church history and also a lot in the Bible. The footprints of Satan are the footprints of the Antichrist. This is such a thing, you won't believe it.

He wanted a throne, he wanted to ***"go up high, to set up his own throne in the far north."***

He also wanted a rule, he also wanted homage. If you read all the traces of this Lucifer, then you find his incarnation. You can see it literally today. And only a blind man cannot see it. But there are too many of them. That's the trouble, spiritually blind.

Here the Lord says, and I'm not judging here, I'm only saying these things out of a deep pain.

Here the Lord wants to give us a lesson along the way.

Then the disciples came to Jesus when they were alone with him. [Mt 17:19]

That's a good thing. They didn't ask when the audience was there. They asked him when they were alone with him. They didn't want to embarrass themselves before all the people.

Then the disciples came to Jesus when they were alone with him.

Today we are here alone with the Lord.

Today they are not unbelievers and not the curious and not the half-hearted here. Today we are here to talk to the Lord, alone with him. Today we want to ask him, why have we not been able to do this and that?

Why have we not been able to cast out the spirit and heal and help?

He answered them, Because of your little faith. 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. [Mt 17:20]

We have all said with sincerity of heart, "Lord, all things are possible for you."

And we have read, probably in Genesis 18, in the story of Abraham, ***"Is anything impossible for the Lord?"*** [1Mo 18:14]

We haven't just known that since today. We have known for some years that God is omnipotent. And we also know that God is able to do everything.

We all know that God raises the dead. He has done it. We believe what the scriptures say. The question here is no longer whether God is able to do everything. That's settled. That's not a question.

Now it's our turn.

Christ in us.

God in Christ.

And he said, ***"The works that I do are not done by me, but by the Father who dwells in me."*** [Joh 14:10]

Now it's Christ in us.

Not that you and I should now move our elbows a little further to the left and right and feel strong.

Far from it. The Lord says, ***"Without me you can do nothing."*** [Joh 15:5]

But if he has taken dwelling in us by faith, that is a fact, then this living faith in God is in you and in me. And then we have to take and apply the word as it is written, ***"They shall lay hands on the sick, they shall cast out devils."*** [Mk 16:17-18] Signs and wonders must take place.

Brothers and sisters, believe me, it's part of it. And if it's not there, then it's missing. And if it is missing, it has not yet been restored.

But we have heard that God restores all things.

The Lord's Church has been described here in this book of God.

And here it says so beautifully, ***"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."***

The Lord wanted to say: Absolutely everything is possible. Even this mountain. If you command it, it will move. Wherever you say, move from here to there. Yes, you can specify, move from here to there.

And it shall happen.

Has the Lord spoken the truth?

Did he just want to show off something frivolous?

No, he wanted to tell the disciples clearly, ***"The works that I have done, ye will do also, because I am going to the Father. But I will be with you and in you until the end of the world."*** [Joh 14:12-13, Mt 28:20]

Brethren, we must take the matter seriously to heart and face up to the divine task and challenge! We can't just sit back and watch others try, but we must give God the chance to do something.

It says here, *"And nothing shall be impossible unto you."* [Mt 17:20]

Not only for God, but nothing will be impossible for us either. That's why, as I said, he was angry and just said, *"O faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I endure you?"* [Mt 17:17]

This is what the Lord says to those around him, *"How long shall I put up with you?"*

How long has the Lord been patient with us?

I tell you, all of us, we would have run out of patience, during the almost 6,000 years, with all the population on earth, we would have never had this patience, but God, in his great mercy, in his justice and holiness, will not give up, but will have patience with us.

But he wants to tell us, and has already told us, *"How much longer should I put up with you, you unbelieving and perverse kind of people?"*

That actually includes all of us.

We are believers and don't believe. Yes, that's how it is. Or is it not? Is it different?

We need to be able to put our right hand on our left side, on our heart, and say, "My God, why don't we just believe as you want us to?"

Oh, that the Lord could write deep into our souls tonight and even if telling us, quietly, through the Spirit, "Every word that my mouth has spoken and your heart believed, you shall see it fulfilled."

After all, God means what he says and has said what he means.

And the Word of God is always valid.

Today he speaks the same to you and to me.

How often did Brother Branham say, **"If these biblical by-products do not follow us, then we are no Bible believers at all."**

These are serious words at the moment, but they are meant to knock us down on the one hand and lift us up on the other.

It is always like that with a Word of God.

We recognize our lack and realize that God is faithful and can remedy our lack and not only can, but will.

Nothing is impossible with him and nothing should be or remain impossible with us either.

All things are possible to him who believes. [Mk 9:23]

May the Lord lead us into prayer, into a believing prayer, revelation of Jesus Christ, build-up of the Church, divine authority, access to what is in the Kingdom of God.

This includes all the promises that the Lord has given us.

May they come true by grace be the prayer of us all.

Amen.

Lord my God, I also join in my brother's prayer. Lord, and we all do. We all do. Faithful Lord, we have transgressed and violated the commandment of God's love. More than all ten commandments put together, you say, "***A new commandment I give unto you.***" And what have we done? We have ignored it, as if you had not spoken to us at all. We have ignored your word and your commandment and have believed with our heads and not received with our hearts.

And therefore we are unable to do what you have commanded.

May your word become divine revelation in our hearts. Then the keys of divine authority in the kingdom of God will also be there.

Lord, put an end to all our double lives, our duplicity, our two faces, our unbelief and all that we carry about us. Put an end to it, so that a new beginning can come.

Teach us how to deal with you and the dealing with you will be the dealing with each other. For what we do to you, we do to our brother and what we do to our brother, we have done to you. That's what you said.

Faithful Lord, our failures are more than we would like.

Faithful God in heaven, how often have we become an offense and it would have been better if we had been thrown into the sea. My God in heaven, but with a millstone so we wouldn't come out again.

Oh my God in heaven, there are too many swimmers. That's why you wanted the millstone hung around our necks.

Oh God in heaven, have mercy on us. For your honor's sake, for your word's sake, for your name's sake, have mercy on us. Oh Lord my God, grant us truthfulness, faithfulness and love for you, for your word and for one another.

Oh Lord, what shall we say to you?

Faithful God in heaven, please bear with us a little longer. Most of it is not over, oh God in heaven. I hope we don't cause you so much grief again. Lord my God, have mercy on me and have mercy on us all.

Put this faith in the word into us. Oh my God, and then give us the guidance and inspiration of your Holy Spirit.

Faithful Lord, we thank you for this evening that you have planned, for this day that you have made. Lord, surely you have already given us the instructions for the weekend.

For your people hobble and limp and stumble and fall over each other and over all obstacles. My God, we are a pathetic people.

Faithful Lord, by your grace, may every root of bitterness, even the grudging against their brother, be put out of our hearts. For you speak to us through James 5, "***Grudge not one against another, brethren, for the coming of the Lord is near,***" O faithful God and we think ourselves to be something.

Lord, we are dust and ashes. But into this dust and ashes you have sown divine seed.

Nevertheless, we still remain dust and ashes. But we treasure the divine.

Praised and glorified be your wonderful and glorious name.

Make us sensible people, Lord, who keep their tongue in check.

O faithful God in heaven, whose words are life-giving, O Lord my God. We feel downcast and comforted and uplifted at the same time, because despite everything we believe that you will have your right fulfilled.

Worship and glory be to your wonderful and holy name.

Amen.