

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 24

Jesus gave Peter, James, and John an amazing exposure to the Father, a preview of His glory, and His true identity. Remember that Jesus had told them they were going up the high mountain to pray. We are not told about the prayer but only about the transfiguration. An encounter with God's presence or a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit is often preceded by a time of prayer. Their mountain-top experience did not remove the need for ministry in the valley of human need. Immediately upon descending from the Mount, Jesus was confronted with the demon-possessed son. As they descended from the mountain, they came to a multitude of people as the scribes were disputing with the Lord's disciples. As soon as they saw the Lord, the people were greatly amazed and ran to Him and greeted Him. The Amplified Bible says, *"Returning from the holy mount, His face and person yet glistening, they were greatly amazed and ran up to Him..."* Obviously, something dramatic was apparent to the multitudes of people that caused them to be amazed at His appearing. In Mark 9:16 Jesus asked the scribes, *"What are you discussing with them?"* Before the scribes could answer, the boy's father spoke up.

Healing the Demon Possessed Son - Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-42

Mark 9:17-18 NKJV Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

Matthew 17:15-16 ESV "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him."

Here is a father making petition for his son who is severely tormented by that evil spirit. Watch the dialogue very closely. This is the last of several times that Jesus cast out demons.

There are several notable examples when He was engaged in casting out demons:

- He commanded the unclean spirit in a man in the Capernaum synagogue to leave (Mark 1:21-28)
- two demon-possessed men in Gadara the demons were commanded to enter a herd of swine (Matthew 8:28-34)

- a mute man (Matthew 9:32-34)
- a man who was mute and blind (Matthew 12:22-28), the daughter of a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28)
- Mary Magdalene had seven demons cast out of her (Luke 8:2)
- multiple times throughout Galilee he cast out demons.

We have noticed that when a person is tormented by demon possession, they experienced various physical, emotional and spiritual traumas. Here, the father's description indicates the intensity of the son's torment. The man brought his son to Jesus' disciples because they had much success in the past in the supernatural ministry. Jesus had commissioned them and sent them out to accomplish the same kind of ministry He did.

Matthew 10:8 NKJV Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Mark 6:12–13 NKJV So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.

When the man brought his son to the disciples, they were not able to cast it out or cure him. Upon hearing that, Jesus spoke to the multitude.

Mark 9:19 NKJV He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."

Although Jesus was addressing the crowd, it is obvious that He was distressed over His disciples' lack of faith, power and authority. Jesus expected them to be able to do this. It was part of the commission and authority He had given them. Their inadequacy to address the boy's situation demonstrated the wide gulf between Jesus' power and spiritual authority and that of the disciples. They had seen and done many things under the Lord's authority and in His name, but were still in need of true faith and power to accomplish what needed to be done. Although Jesus gave them authority to do this, according to what the Lord said, they needed greater faith and increased prayer and fasting. This faith and power would be necessary for their future ministry. After telling them this, Jesus said, "*Bring him to Me.*"

Mark 9:20 NKJV Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

The mute spirit was a demon that violently produced the seizures and

convulsions. This response happened when the evil spirit was brought into the presence of one with divine authority, (Mark 1:26; Mark 9:20).

Notice how Jesus responded.

Mark 9:21–22 NKJV So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

Mark 9:23–24 NKJV Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

We have heard those words often. “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Do you think Jesus really meant that “all things are possible?” This gets to the matter of faith that Jesus already spoke about.

Jesus was amazed that none of that generation had faith to do what needed to be done. The father did believe, but he did not know if his faith was strong enough. True faith sets no limits on God’s power.

According to what Jesus said, “all things are possible to him who believes.” Have you ever felt that your faith may not be strong enough?

1 John 5:14–15 NKJV Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

This kind of confidence in God brings answers to our petitions. How can we acquire this kind of confidence in God? According to what Jesus indicated, a true and active relationship with God is necessary.

Mark 9:25 ESV And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

It was not difficult for Jesus to remove the unclean spirit. Take note of the Lord’s authority when He said, “*I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.*” The father wanted healing for his son who was severely tormented by this condition. To bring the healing and deliverance, Jesus addressed the mute and deaf spirit. He gave two commands: “Come out of him” and “enter him no more.”

Mark 9:26–27 NKJV Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is

dead.”But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

The evil spirit recognized Jesus and His authority. After the demon fled, the boy was totally exhausted and looked like he was dead. The evil spirit had been controlling his body. Breaking Satan’s power is like coming back to life.

Why were the disciples powerless over this situation?

Jesus gave three answers for their inability to deal with this situation during this story.

Matthew 17:20–21 NKJV So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as 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. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

First, Jesus said you must have faith.

How much faith is required? According to what Jesus is saying, the amount of faith is not as important as having real faith. When real faith is exercised, the mountain will move. The word ‘*mountain*’ refers to any obstacle, hindrance or humanly insurmountable problem. In this situation, the mountain was a severely tormented boy who was demon possessed. We should address mountain moving faith in our lives also. Jesus expected His disciples to have this kind and quality of faith. This kind of faith comes from the relationship and realization of God’s presence, power, will, purposes, and provision. Our faith must be unwavering in this.

The second and third reason the disciples were powerless was due to a lack of prayerfulness.

Some of the original manuscripts and some translations omit the reference to fasting. Many translations that include fasting have it in brackets or in italics. Why did Jesus say they needed to fast and pray?

What is the reason for fasting and prayer?

In the Old Testament, fasting was often associated with repentance, sorrow for sin, and terrible situations when it seemed that God did not act. People who fasted in the Old Testament were characterized with sorrow, sackcloth, lamenting, and ashes. The Christian is not characterized by those things. We have been brought out of sorrow into joy. So, why should we fast and pray? Fasting and prayer in the New Testament is a spiritual discipline to sharpen one’s focus or deepen

one's experience. This kind of fasting brings the petitioner closer to God and increases their faith and trust in God. Jesus was referring to a type of prayer that is earnest and intense. This kind of prayer always possesses a sense of earnestly seeking to know God, His will, His power, purposes, and provision. Fasting and prayer is not an exercise to attempt to persuade God to do something. This is a spiritual exercise to bring us into a greater reliance on God and recognition of His power and presence. We cannot become dependent on past successes. This kind of activity recognizes that the source of victory, power and success depends on God. By saying "this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting," Jesus is referring to the relationship and fellowship with the Father. Something happens to us when we spend time with God in effectual and fervent prayer.

After Jesus healed the demon-possessed son and taught about faith, He privately told His disciples that He was about to be betrayed.

Mark 9:30–32 NKJV Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

We have noticed that almost every time Jesus did something that revealed His authority and power, He was faced with great opposition and attempts to put Him to death.

Two predictions are being made with Jesus' statement "the Son of Man is being betrayed."

The word "betrayed" literally means "to be delivered up" or "to be handed over."

First, God the Father has delivered Christ Jesus His Son over into the hands of men.

Romans 8:32 NKJV He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Second, men are going to deliver the Son of Man to be rejected and killed, (Matthew 26:1, 14-16, 47-56; Matthew 27:26)

Jesus knew that His time to be delivered into the hands of men was near at hand. We also see that Jesus was betrayed by the Jews and by

Judas. Although this is referring to what is about to transpire, Jesus was actively being betrayed and pursued. When the disciples heard this, they did not know how to respond for they as well as all others did not understand that the Messiah must suffer and die for His people. This announcement is one of three times Jesus predicted His death in Mark, (8:31; 9:30-32; 10:33-34).

How can we prepare ourselves for spiritual warfare and acts of power and faith?

Can mountains really be moved by faith?