

Faith for Victory over Satanic Strongholds

Text: Mark 9:14-29 (See also Matt. 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-42)

Introduction:

1. Context: The Mount of Transfiguration. Events in these verses take place the day after the experience on the mount (Luke 9:37)
2. The disciples discuss the O.T. prophecy of Elijah as they descend from the Mount.
3. The contrast between the Transfiguration on the mountaintop and the terror in the valley is striking.
4. The theme of faith is imbedded into the account. Note Vs. 19, 23-24, Matt. 17:20. We will learn about the necessity of faith to overcome Satanic obstacles under 4 headings:

I. The Trial of Faith (Vs. 14-20)

A. The Disciples' Powerlessness (Vs. 14-16; 18b)

1. Christ finds the 9 waiting disciples embroiled in a debate with the scribes (Vs. 14). It would appear from the account which is to follow, that their failure to help the demon possessed boy had given them cause to discredit and undermine the ministry of Christ. The spiritual powerlessness of the disciples affected the people's view of Christ and His power. When we live powerless lives, it brings reproach upon the Name of Christ.
2. "could not" = they did not have the strength or power. This desperate man had sought help from the 9 disciples who stayed behind while Christ, Peter, James and John were on the Mountain top but they had failed.
3. Their failure is intriguing as they had cast out demons previously (See Mark 6:7-13)

B. The Father's Problem (Vs. 17-18a)

The child was possessed of an evil spirit. This had the following effects on the boy.

1. Loss of sanity – he is described in Matt. 17:15 as a 'lunatick' which is a word related to the moon (lunar). Word literally means "moon struck".
2. Loss of speech – "dumb spirit" He could not speak coherently. He would only make unintelligible shrieks and cries (Luke 9:39; Vs. 26)
3. Loss of hearing – "deaf spirit" (Vs. 25)
4. Loss of control
 - a. "taketh him" = to seize upon, lay hold of, to take possession of. These seizures were accompanied with sudden screams (Luke 9:39)

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- b. “teareth him” = graphic term for violent convulsions
 - c. “he foameth” = at the mouth
 - d. “gnasheth with his teach” = to grind and snap the teeth together
 - e. “pineth away” = to wither or dry up. Same word translated “withered away” (Matt. 21:19) and “dried up” (Mark 11:20) regarding the dying of a fig tree. Describes the state of weariness and exhaustion after these episodes.
5. Note: While not all sickness and disabilities are from the devil (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:7-9), some are the result of demon possession (e.g. this example and others like the woman with a spirit of infirmity recorded in Luke 13:10-17)

C. The Lord’s Perception (Vs. 19)

1. It was an Unbelieving Generation – ‘faithless’
2. It was an Unholy Generation. Matt. 17:17 & Luke 9:41 include the word ‘perverse’ which means twisted, distorted, perverted.
3. Morgan: “The use of the two words indicate a sequence. A generation that loses its faith, becomes distorted, out of shape.”
4. Note: It appears that the disciples were the main objects of this rebuke. Christ was justly exasperated and grieved at the spiritual weakness that confronted him.
5. “bring him unto me” = glorious words. Christ would accomplish what others had failed to do.

D. The child’s Presentation (Vs. 20)

1. “saw him” = the demon reacted violently at the sight of the Lord Jesus
2. ‘wallowed’ = to roll or tumble. Imperfect tense describes the continued twisting and rolling of the victim, while his mouth was foaming.

II. The Testing of Faith (Vs. 21-24)

A. The Question (Vs. 21)

1. The timing of the possession (Vs. 21)
 - a. Sometimes we have to go back to where it all started. We come to Christ with our trial, seeking His deliverance and the Lord does a work of probing. Christ dealt with the dad before the boy!
 - b. Christ asks this man to identify the timing when the Satanic breach occurred in his home. As fathers commissioned with the oversight and protection of our homes, we do bear a fearful responsibility to be alert and on guard to Satanic intrusion into the home. Somewhere this father had failed to be a godly umbrella of protection.
 - c. “of a child” = from childhood. Vs. 24 indicates he was still young at this point.

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- d. The question would also further draw the man's attention to the hopelessness of the situation so that he might be further driven to Christ in complete dependence.
2. The history of the possession (Vs. 22)
 - a. 'oftentimes' = these Satanic convulsions occurred on a regular basis. Imagine what this would have been like for the parents!
 - b. "to destroy him" = the malignant, murderous intent of this vile spirit. Satan is a liar, a murderer, a deceiver and a devourer (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8).

B. The Petition (Vs. 22)

1. It was sincere – a plea for compassion and help
2. It was doubtful – a plea that contained an element of doubt ("if thou canst do anything")

C. The Condition (Vs. 23)

1. Christ transfers the question mark from Himself and His power to the father and his faith; He corrects the focus of the capability.
2. "all things are possible" = to the prayer of faith all things are possible as genuine faith will not lead you to ask something foolish. "Faith-prompted prayer asks in harmony with the will of God." (Hiebert) Matt. 21:22 *"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."*

D. The Supplication (Vs. 24)

1. It was fervent prayer – "cried out, and said with tears"
2. It was believing prayer – "I believe"
3. It was humble prayer – "help thou mine unbelief" "They who feel their lack of faith are in the best condition for removing this lack." (Lenski) "Our faith may be weak but when we seek Christ for more faith, He will provide that which is lacking." (Sorenson)

III. The Triumph of Faith (Vs. 25-27)

A. Release (Vs. 25-26)

1. The character of the demon (Vs. 25a)
 - a. 'foul' = unclean. Word used in a moral sense
 - b. "dumb and deaf" = the evil spirit had made his victim dumb and deaf
2. The command to the demon (Vs. 25b)
 - a. "charge thee" = military style command. Christ exercises His Divine authority.
 - b. "come out" = he delivered the boy from the demon in the present
 - c. "enter no more" = he preserved the boy from the demon the future. Christ's work is permanent, He works for eternity.
3. The conduct of the demon (Vs. 26)
 - a. 'cried' = in rage

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- b. “rent him sore” = Satan does not give up his hold on lives without strong resistance. Even when faced with an ultimatum from the Almighty Son of God, this demon demonstrated one final act of defiance and sought to further damage the child.

B. Restoration (Vs. 27; Luke 9:42)

- 1. To the child’s person (Vs. 27)
 - a. The Lord not only has power to deliver from sin and Satan, He also has power to repair and heal the damage Satan leaves behind.
 - b. The life of Christ filled the void left by the evil spirit.
- 2. To the child’s parents (Luke 9:42)
 - a. Luke 9:42 “...and delivered him again to his father.”
 - b. Only Christ can heal and repair a damaged home

IV. The Teaching concerning Faith (Vs. 28-29)

A. The Question concerning their Failure (Vs. 28)

- 1. They acknowledged their failure and asked for help.
- 2. Failures can be great opportunities to learn much if we will humble ourselves and have a teachable spirit. There is a place for self-examination after the defeats in our Christian lives.

B. The Instruction concerning their Failure (Vs. 29)

- 1. The symptom of their failure – faithlessness
 - a. Matt. 17:20 “*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.*” See also Mark 11:22-24
 - b. “mustard seed” = the smallest seed used in Agriculture in Israel.
 - c. “this mountain” = illustration to impress upon their minds the truth that God’s power is available to overcome impossible obstacles (like demon possession) through faith.
- 2. The source (root cause) of their failure – prayerlessness
 - a. “this kind” = Greek word is ‘genus’. This was a particularly powerful kind of demon. Not all demons are of equal power. Some are more wicked than others (Matt. 12:45)
 - b. “prayer and fasting” = God’s method for winning the big battles. More prayer equals more faith and more power.
 - i. Fasting is not to twist the arm of an unwilling God but rather it demonstrates our dependence upon him more fully and also sharpens the effectiveness of prayer in us.
 - ii. Warning! Modern versions have deleted the word fasting and in so doing, robbed the Christian of one of his most

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powerful secret weapons with which he can defeat the enemy! Matt. 17:21 totally removed from NIV.

- iii. A failure in the personal lives of the disciples resulted in a failure in the public ministry lives of the disciples. The disciples lacked preparation of heart and spirit.
- iv. Note: The time for fasting and prayer is **before** being faced with the Satanic battle. Once faced with the demon possessed boy, it was too late to go and prepare the heart. Often as believers we fail in the challenges, we face due to insufficient spiritual resources.

Conclusion: Are you saved? Jesus can set you free from sin and Satan. Fathers, are we being a channel of spiritual blessing to our families through faith?