



Spiritual Warfare: Pulling Down Strongholds

MARK 9:17-29

LESSON 19 – PRAYER AND FASTING

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Dealing with the Demonic

- ▶ Mark 9:17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 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.” 19 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.” 20 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.

Dealing with the Demonic

- ▶ 21 So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 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.” 23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Dealing with the Demonic

- ▶ 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” 26 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.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Unbelief

- ▶ Matthew 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” 20 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.

A Matter of Authority?

- ▶ Matthew 10:1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.
- ▶ Jesus has authority (Matt. 28:18-20) and He gave the disciples authority over demons and diseases as an evidence of the validity of the gospel of the kingdom that they were sent out to preach, yet even with the authority to cast out demons, the disciples failed.
- ▶ Jesus identifies the problem as a matter of unbelief – while we think often of His rebuke, “O ye of little faith,” in our account here He mentions faith the size of a mustard seed. So it is not about the size of one’s faith, but the Object of that faith!

However

- ▶ It is interesting that Jesus tells the disciples that with “faith as a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible for you,” He then goes on to say, “However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
- ▶ The work of dealing with the demonic is not merely a matter of authority, but a matter of spiritual discipline. It requires rigorous works of righteousness that flow from a heart of obedience that is set on pursuing God.

Prayer and Fasting

- ▶ Prayer is mentioned in the listing of the believer's spiritual armor along with the Sword of the Spirit.
- ▶ Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Prayer and Fasting

- ▶ The key to power in prayer is “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” That is, the power is not in the prayer, but the One to Whom we are praying!
- ▶ This is a longer way to say, “Pray without ceasing.”
- ▶ Knowing we are in constant communion with God, and that to do that requires spiritual self-discipline, is the first step toward doing the impossible in the realm of dealing with the demonic...be it demonic doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1) or demonic wisdom (James 3:15).

Prayer and Fasting

- ▶ But what is the significance of fasting in the arena of spiritual warfare? Why is it that Jesus says “this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting”?
- ▶ Fasting, Scripturally understood, is a spiritual discipline. The disciples failure then in the area of prayer and fasting demonstrates that they were depending upon themselves – they had faith in their qualifications, their authority, their allegiance to Christ....they found their faith placed firmly in themselves, and they failed.

An Unspiritual Frame

- ▶ Spurgeon says that these disciples, “had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value, and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures. We shall be like Samson, who went out and shook himself as he had done aforetime; but the Spirit of God had departed from him; and the Philistines soon overcame him,—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter.”

An Unspiritual Frame

- ▶ Spurgeon continues, “If we are to do the Lord's work, and to do it successfully, we must have faith in him, we must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit, and by faith we must hang upon the living God from day to day.”

When You Fast

- ▶ The spiritual discipline of fasting, as Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount, is a private discipline. It is not done to be seen by men. And herein we find the secret to the power of fasting. It is a matter of worship and obedience that takes place between the disciple and His Master. It is done in secret.
- ▶ Matt. 6:16 “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

When You Fast

- ▶ Jesus in His teaching transforms fasting from its Old Testament norms and the traditional uses by the Pharisees for self-aggrandizement. Now we see that
- ▶ 1. Fasting is not a form of outward piety
- ▶ 2. Fasting is not an exercise to bring the body into subjection by neglect
- ▶ 3. Fasting is not a means of social protest
- ▶ 4. Fasting is not a means of getting God's attention
- ▶ 5. Fasting is a personal exercise between the individual and God, "setting aside the normal, daily distractions of life in order to seek God's clear direction in their lives as they wait upon God" – JM Boice – 2 Cor. 6:4-5

When You Fast

- ▶ We also learn that fasting need not be only about food. We can and should also be fasting from other things:
- ▶ 1. Not commanded but expected – “Voluntary abstinence for a time from various necessities of life (food, drink, sleep, association with people) in order to focus more strongly on the one needful thing – our relationship with Christ.” – Halesby
- ▶ 2. A period of abstinence for the purpose of drawing closer to God, to watch and wait to know Him and His will better
- ▶ 3. Using time for prayer, Scripture reading, etc., for growth in grace

When You Fast

- ▶ “Soul Fattening Fasting” – as CH Spurgeon describes it includes:
- ▶ Nourishing the soul while denying the body
- ▶ Normality – be normal, not conspicuous. That is, as Jesus tells us,
- ▶ Wash your face - “Forget your face; forget yourself” - MLJ
- ▶ Dress like you typically do
- ▶ Remember, it is not about self
- ▶ And “Forget other people” – MLJ

A Selfless Mindset

- ▶ Prayer and Fasting as keys to victory in the realm of spiritual warfare flows directly from the truth that these two spiritual endeavors require selflessness. These activities are focused upon God, believing what He tells us in His Word, and they spring from a reliance on Him, His power, His authority, and His Sovereign Lordship over every inch of His creation!

Be Concerned Only with God

- ▶ Don't focus on the demonic. Turn your eyes upon Jesus!
- ▶ Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said of Christ's instructions to not do these things to be seen by men, "The interest and opinions of other people and your impression upon them does not factor into your standing before God at all. Be concerned only about God and about pleasing Him. Be concerned about His honor and His glory. Even though the world may never know what we are, God knows, and at the Great Day it will be announced before the whole world."
- ▶ Spiritual victory is found when we get out of the way. It's not about us. Had they known this, the disciples would have succeeded. Their failure is a lesson for us all.



Next

▶ Lesson 20 – John 8:31-32 – Free Your Mind