

The Demon that Would not be Cast Out

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] The life of Jesus in the book of Mark. And we are this week in Mark chapter 9, about halfway through. We're going to start in Mark 9, 14.

Last week we looked at the transfiguration. And Jesus is, he went up onto the mountain with three of his disciples. And this account that we're going to read today and look at today is an immediate continuation.

We'll see that as we read. But a few things that we'll look at as we study the scripture is the big picture is that Jesus' disciples are having a failure in their miracle ministry that he gave them. There's this demon that is stubborn and does not want to get cast out. And so there's some addressing of that. Jesus shows some exasperation with his disciples.

We'll look at why that is. And then there's a reference to this quote or a phrase that all things are possible to those who believe.

[1 : 06] We'll look at that more closely. And then there's also at the very end a reference to the efficacy of prayer and fasting.

And so we'll talk about that as well. But what we're going to start with, we're just going to read through, get a big picture idea of what we're going to study here this morning. And then we'll go through and look at each verse one at a time.

So again, Mark 9, verse 14. And when he came to the disciples, he saw a great multitude around them and scribes disputing with them.

Immediately when they saw him, all the people were greatly amazed and running to him, they greeted him. And he asked the scribes, what are you discussing with them?

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 and he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.

[2 : 07] So I spoke to your disciples that they should cast it out, but they could not. He answered him and he said, oh, faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. 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.

As he asked his father, 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. 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.

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.

[3 : 16] 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.

And when he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? So he said to them, this kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

So like I said, this is a scene that Jesus came onto right after he was coming down from the mountain.

And if you'll remember, when Jesus went up onto that mount and there was this scene of him being transfigured, him glowing, him shining, both his clothes and his face, that he brought three people

with him.

He brought his, three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John. And what we're looking at here is he's coming back from the mountain and his other nine disciples are having this dispute with the scribes.

[4 : 28] Again, it says in verse 14, and when he came to the disciples, he saw a great multitude around them. So there's many, many people and the scribes disputing with them. It's unclear whether his scribes are disputing with just the disciples or with the people as well.

Immediately when they saw him, all the people were greatly amazed and running to him, they greeted him. So they're pretty excited. Hey, we're talking to the disciples. They're not doing so great right now, but here's Jesus.

So everybody runs to greet him and they're excited. And so Jesus, at this point, he asks the scribes, what are you discussing with them?

And so you can imagine, as we just read here, there's some, this man has come to the disciples asking for a miracle for his son. And the disciples are failing to get the job done.

And so you can imagine what the dispute here is with the scribes. The scribes don't want the people's affection to be towards Jesus and his disciples. They don't want him to be seen as a credible person.

[5 : 39] So you can imagine this failure by the disciples and what it kind of offers the scribes as far as an opportunity to dispute the credibility of Jesus and also his disciples.

Then one of the crowd answered and said, Teacher, I brought you my son who has a mute spirit. And so this is the guy that was looking for a miracle for his son.

He says here that he has a mute spirit. It just means he can't talk. Later on, actually at the very end here, as we read, it said that Jesus called it a deaf and dumb spirit.

And so there's evidently some both deafness and dumbness, the inability to speak, involved. And the boy's father describes to Jesus what's going on.

He says, 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.

[6 : 48] This is interesting because the disciples had already had a fair bit of success from what we can tell. In fact, from what we can tell, they had exclusive success.

All they had had was success with the ministry that Jesus had given them. If you remember, Jesus sent out the 12 disciples and he also sent out a larger group of about 70 disciples to go preach the gospel of the kingdom, he told them, and also to heal the sick, to cast out evil spirits, and to do other miracles.

There's a, we know that they had had some success because there's this passage, this one is in the book of Luke, and it says this, Luke chapter 10, verse 17, then the 70 returned with joy.

They're coming back from their mission trip, this short-term mission trip, if we can call it that, with joy saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

When we tell the demons to come out, they do it. Jesus had given them that authority. But a few verses later, Luke, and a few verses later, verse 20, it says, Jesus says, nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

[8 : 12] Jesus wanted to make sure that they're excited about the right things. You know, demonstrative works of miraculous power are pretty exciting, but a lot of times we can forget the most important things are the spiritual things.

But these disciples had had success in casting out spirits, but for whatever reason, right now, this one was stumping them. They were not having the success that they had had before.

So the father calls this a mute spirit. I guess his son is unable to speak, and it's also causing these manifestations of what says it seizes him.

We call these today seizures, and we actually call a condition like this epilepsy, in which you have frequent seizures. seizures. And so, one question to ask is, well, if somebody has seizures, does that mean that they have a demonic influence in their life?

And I don't think that's necessarily the case at all. Seizures is actually a condition in which there's some kind of difficulty in the brain, right, in the nervous system in which your brain is not communicating like it should with the rest of your body.

[9 : 31] And so that can very obviously be just a purely natural phenomenon. There's something broken, some wires crossed or disconnected or something like that within your nervous system.

Yet at the same time, we see this kind of thing, not just here, but in other places, where demonic activity in a person's life does include things like muteness, inability to speak or hear, and also seizures.

We see this several times specifically in the ministry of Jesus. I think it's important to note too that muteness, not being able to speak and also not being able to hear, can also be neurological or part of the nervous system, problems in that nervous system.

And so, you know, what are we to make of this? I think that we can, you know, evil spirits can have influence, especially at this time we see it in the lives of people to impact, I think, their minds.

And I think that's where evil spirits have the most, that's where their playground is, is impacting people's minds. If you can impact people's minds, you know, you can, through that channel, right, impact their body as well.

[10 : 54] Verse 19 says this, he answered him, this is to the father, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. Jesus is a little frustrated here. He's kind of annoyed, it seems, right? O faithless generation. He says, you know, you should have been able to handle this, but I'll take care of it.

That's okay. And Jesus puts up with a lot. We see this, this isn't the only time, right, where Jesus is a little bit exasperated, either at his disciples or sometimes the people.

It's not completely clear who Jesus is speaking to here, but he does make this reference to a generation, right, a whole generation. So it seems he's kind of exasperated with everybody. the people, the disciples, but we actually see both here, and then there's a parallel account in the book of Matthew where he actually addresses the faith of both his disciples and the faith of the father.

[12 : 03] And so, I think we can see in this faithless generation comment that he's likely referencing both. Verse 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.

Again, these are common things that come along with seizures. But notice that when this happens, this happens when the boy is brought to Jesus.

There is this conflict just coming into proximity to Jesus and this spirit, it seems, has a reaction, has somewhat of a temper tantrum, if you will, and is reacting in this boy to the presence of Jesus.

And at this time, it says in verse 21, Jesus asks the father a question. He wants to know more. How long has this been happening to him? And the father says, from childhood.

Now, the scripture has already said that this is a boy. And so, we don't know how old he is. He's still considered a boy, a child, at this point.

[13 : 16] But he's had this from childhood. This word here, used for a child, actually, a lot of times, refers to infants. So, little children.

So, this is likely, maybe a preteen boy, or maybe a teenage boy, I would say. But this has been happening since he was very, very small. One of the things that I think about when I read this is, you know, I understand, it's a lot easier to understand when difficulty trials, something like this happens to an adult.

But when it happens to a child, and children, the Bible represents children as innocent. You know, they haven't done anything wrong. But still, there is the consequences of sin in the world that can impact all of us.

And, a lot of times, we see what's taught in the Bible that demonic influence is typically, comes about through our actions and our behavior.

And, even today, today, and I'm sure this was happening back then, Jesus actually references people worshiping demons. A lot of these idols that were worshiped in that day, and it wasn't just the pagan people, it was actually even God's people, the Jews, were doing this kind of thing.

[14 : 47] And this is something that had been happening for centuries among the Jewish people. God's people who should have been worshiping the one true God, Jehovah, would many times fall into worshiping idols, and, because of that, demons themselves.

Did you know that this happens today, even in America? A lot of times, we think, oh, worshiping of demons, you know, that happens in other countries, you know, third world countries. But there are

plenty of people in this country that specifically and intentionally build altars to demons, try to speak to them, ask them to come into their bodies.

We have things like Ouija boards and, what do you call it, automatic handwriting in which people invite spirits to basically move things around and try to give them secret information, you know, that they would not otherwise have.

And all of these kinds of things are, you're playing in the devil's playground. It's dangerous and you give Satan and his demons leverage into your life that he otherwise wouldn't have.

And I can imagine that something like that might have been going on in the family of this boy. Now, since this was something that happened from infancy, I can't imagine that it was the boy at all.

[16:09] But very likely, maybe his parents or family. And it makes me think about me as a father and how many things that we as parents can do that can bring trouble even into our children's lives.

the next thing here in verse 23, Jesus, oh well, the thing here that the, the next thing that the father says, he says, and often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him.

So these aren't just like random episodes of epilepsy. He can, this man knows, because he seems to know this is a spirit, right? He knows it's an evil spirit, not just some natural phenomenon.

And he, one of the reasons I think he can tell is because these episodes of seizures don't just happen randomly. They happen at very seemingly inopportune times where they have a campfire and all of a sudden he's going into one of these episodes and he's actually thrown into the fire.

He falls into the fire. Or they're near water and he, it seems like this spirit is trying to kill his son. And isn't what, isn't that what Jesus says about the enemy?

[17:33] John 10, 10 says, the thief comes only but for what? To steal and to kill and destroy. Of course, Jesus follows that up with, but I have come that you might have life.

Satan's a murderer. He wants to steal from us. He wants to kill people if he can, if he can, if he can take that opportunity and destroy the lives of anybody he can get his hands on, anyone that he can influence.

So the man says, he's desperate, he says, but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Notice how he asks that question.

If you can do anything. I'm not sure. I mean, your disciples, they couldn't help. Maybe you can, maybe. I'm not sure. I was just talking to the scribes and they seem to think that you're a fraud. So I don't know. Can you? Can you, Jesus? Can you help me? If you can, I would love it if you would. Lord, verse 23, Jesus said to him, if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.

[18:55] Immediately, the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. I don't know about you, but that response from that man resonates with me.

You know, it's not always easy to believe. Sometimes it is. Sometimes it's hard. When you're going through difficult times, whether it's just trusting that God knows what's best for us, trusting in his promises, whatever they might be that we're trusting in, sometimes it's difficult to believe.

And so, we're putting our best foot forward with a little bit of faith. But God, could you help me?

I could use some more. And notice how here Jesus wasn't upset about this, right? He's, all right, I'll come along and I'll stand in the gap.

God, Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief. I want to talk about this phrase, if you can believe all things are possible to him who believes.

[20:17] Because there's a lot in there. And I think there's some danger. You know, there's a, it's easy to take quotes out of the Bible and put them up on our wall, right?

Or, today, right, we put them up on the internet, little memes, you know, put on Facebook or Instagram or whatever it might be. And they can be encouraging and inspiring. But a lot of times they can be taken out of context.

And what they seem to say on the very face of them is not what they mean at all. And so as Christians, we need to be careful. We need to be students of God's word.

You know, I, what I see today a lot of is what I call cliché Christianity. Christianity. That our Christianity is built on a series of Christian clichés and that is all.

Where we don't read the Bible, we don't study the Scripture to understand what the words are saying, but we just take different quotes out of the Bible and, you know, put them on Facebook every once in a while or maybe put them on our wall or sometimes even memorize them and that's good.

[21 : 24] In fact, I forgot, we forgot our memory verse this morning, didn't we? Memorizing verses is great, but a lot of times we can quote verses out of context and we think we know what they mean and we think maybe others know what they mean but they don't.

They don't mean those things that they seem to say on the face of them. So here, on the face of it, if you can believe all things are possible to him who believes, I mean, that's a pretty big statement. All things are possible to those who believe.

I mean, it sounds like a Disney movie, right? And so we can turn our Christianity into a fairy tale. Or, we have things like New Age spiritualism today where there is this kind of view that, you know, if you believe enough in certain things, you can have this wonderful, tremendous life.

Has anybody heard of this thing called the secret? secret? There's this New Age kind of movement in the last, I don't know, 20 or 30 years. Oprah's had on different people and there are books written about the secret.

Oh, that's interesting. What's the secret? Everybody wants to know secrets, right? And, basically, the big idea is, the secret is, if you just believe enough that you can have a good life, then it'll come to you.

[22 : 55] It's like magnetism or gravity or something like that. And, there's enough truth in it, right? I mean, we all know people who are very negative in life and it seems like they attract negativity, right?

And, if you're very positive, you can, you know, attract positivity in a very general sense. But, from a spiritual sense, you know, that's, believing in something enough is not this magic fairy tale type of thing.

And, that's not what the Bible teaches. And, so, in this context, in this context in which Jesus is teaching, I think we need to look at, you know, what is, what is Jesus teaching in this time and what he's doing on the earth in these three years.

And, Jesus came with a ministry of healing. end up coming up against demonic powers. And, so, he is offering something to the people that was not readily available to them before during this special time in which he had his three-year ministry in which he was presenting to Israel a kingdom that's at hand.

And, there's a special dispensation, if you will, for how things work at this time. And, so, Jesus taught his own disciples that when you do your miracle ministry, he sent them out, he taught them about how they should do it, that they should have faith and not doubt when they commanded a miracle to happen.

[24 : 39] And, we actually see that in the lives of his disciples in the miracle ministry of Jesus, that they didn't get down on their knees and pray and ask the Father for a miracle, they just commanded things, stand up and walk, open your eyes, these kinds of things.

Jesus actually, if we look at the same thing in Matthew, if you turn to Matthew chapter 17, this is a similar account, it's actually much shorter in chapter 17.

but in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 19, the same account, it says this, then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, why could we not cast it out?

We're kind of jumping ahead a little bit, but Jesus' response is a little bit different here. So, Jesus said to them, So, Jesus was talking to his own disciples and saying, hey, you need to have faith, and he was also talking to the man, and he says, well, if you had faith too, you could see a miracle come to pass.

So, in this context, is Jesus saying, well, if you believe you can fly, you can fly? Is that what he's like? Peter Pan. Is that what Jesus is saying?

[26 : 16] No, he's saying, listen, I came to provide something, but there is an element in which you need to exercise faith. So, anything that I said through my ministry is possible, you can have.

Just apply some faith. That's the context. We'll talk in a little bit about other ways that we can apply our faith, especially in the time in which we live.

But to continue on, we'll go in verse 25 here, back to Mark chapter 9. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, so they must have gone to the side, right?

Because what it looks like here is that the people come running. They see something happening and they're coming running to see what's going on. So they must have kind of gone to the side to, Jesus was probably dealing with this man and his son privately.

They came running together and he rebuked the unclean spirit. So he saw the people come and he's like, alright, I'm going to just take care of this right now, before this crowd forms and gets in the way.

[27 : 23] He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more. Again, notice Jesus, he's commanding that spirit.

Now this is probably what the disciples did, the other nine disciples, and they failed. You know, I think about our Christian lives, there's a lot of times where we fail in our Christian life.

We don't have a miracle ministry like the disciples, but we have other kinds of ministries. And sometimes, you know, we fail.

We don't do a great job. But here, Jesus is coming in and he's not going to fail. He has all power and all authority from heaven, just like he said.

And he can talk to the spirit and that spirit has to obey him. Notice the other thing that he says, enter him no more.

[28 : 26] Get out and don't come back. Why would he say that? Well, because it might come back. If he didn't, he might leave and then, in fact, do you know that Jesus actually spoke about this happening?

Matthew chapter 12, verse 43, Jesus is speaking and he says, when an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places seeking rest and finds none.

then he says, I'll return to my home from which I came and when he comes he finds it empty, swept and put in order. Then he goes and he takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter and dwell there and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Then he says, so shall it be with this wicked generation. He's using that as just an example of the generation of Israel, but he's describing a real thing that actually can happen.

The spirit leaves and can come back and do more damage even bringing other spirits with him. So Jesus says, leave and you're not allowed to come back. By my word, don't think you can come back.

[29 : 38] You've got to stay out. And then here's what happened, verse 26. 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.

Now we've read through what this evil spirit, this unclean spirit had done already, even just right here in the presence of Jesus. This is a very dramatic scene.

Reading the words I don't think can quite really probably impress on our imagination just how dramatic this was.

And it sounds like it comes out of a horror movie, doesn't it? And why is that? Well, a lot of times, horror films are based on reality, not complete reality.

A lot of times, right? That's what a lot of stories are, right? You take a little bit of reality and you add to it, right? But there are people who have experienced this even in this day and age.

[30 : 49] screaming, convulsing, and it came out of him. And then it says as he became as dead, he just dropped lifeless to the ground.

But Jesus took him by the hand and he lifted him up and he arose. I don't know if this is intentional or not, but it just makes me think of Jesus giving us life, right?

Reaching down and we are like dead people and he reaches down and gives us life in a spiritual sense. I don't know if that's intentional or not, but it makes me think of that. And then finally this, verse 28, and when he had come into the house, so they were all done, you know, who knows what kind of happened in between, but they went into a home for some private time.

It was just him and his disciples and so they asked him. They probably were maybe too embarrassed to ask him in public, but they asked him privately, why could we not cast him out? I mean, we did this before. I think they were surprised when they tried to cast out this demon and they couldn't. And so he said to them, this kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

[32 : 20] The first thing I want to look at is this kind. Well, what does that mean? This kind? Are there different kinds? Well, there are. There are different kinds of unclean spirits. We've actually seen that, right?

This is maybe what the fourth time in Mark where we've seen an unclean spirit involved in the ministry of Jesus and they all manifest in different ways. They all have different ways that they impact the one who is suffering from the demonic activity.

But you know, evil spirits are just like people. They have different personalities just like we have different personalities. personalities. They come in all sorts. Some spirits might be timid. Some might be more bold. Some might be more quiet, like us, right? And some more expressive. And I also think some have a little bit of power and some spirits have more.

Now, all spirits are evil. But that passage we read from Jesus about the spirit leaving and bringing back seven more, what does it say about those seven more?

[33 : 33] More evil than the first. Some spirits are more evil than others. You know, C.S. Lewis wrote a really interesting book. Screwtape Letters.

And it's all fiction, right? But he tries to paint a picture of what it looks like. There's a whole other world out there that's real of demonic activity, of evil spirits.

And we're not given a completely lucid picture of what that looks like, but we're given a fair bit of data. And I think C.S. Lewis does a fairly decent job, as much as you can, and trying to paint a picture of what that world might look like based on the biblical data that we have.

That there's a hierarchy of demons in the world. Minions, if you will, and the masters. In Ephesians chapter 6, that's one of the great passages on spiritual warfare because we fight as well.

Maybe not in the same way that we see Jesus doing it and casting out spirits, but we have to deal with spiritual influences, demonic influences in our lives.

[34 : 52] And so, Paul in Ephesians chapter 6 talks about how we wrestle. And he says this in Ephesians 6, 12, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Why all these descriptive terms just mean the same thing? Well, I think there Paul is just describing this hierarchy. hierarchy. You have demonic powers and some have little authority and some are rulers.

Some are spiritual hosts of wickedness that are in the heavenly places. There's actually another passage that actually brings a lot of clarity to what goes on in the spirit realm.

In the book of Daniel, if you remember Daniel, he was seeking answers from the Lord. He had all these dreams and visions, didn't always know what they meant.

He was interpreting dreams for the king. And so, there was a time, this is in Daniel chapter 10, in which he fasted and he prayed, looking for answers.

[36 : 14] And finally, after three weeks, an angel, a messenger of the Lord arrives. And he says, hey, I was actually sent when you first prayed three weeks ago.

This is wild. But I actually had a conflict on the way here. You know, angels aren't omnipresent, like God is.

They're not. I got into a conflict on the way here. It says this in Daniel chapter 10, verse 13, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days.

And behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, Michael the archangel, one of the Lord's angels, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

The kings of Persia? What's he talking about? He's talking about the earthly kings of Persia? No. There are powers in the heavenly realms.

[37 : 18] There are likely spirits that have some realm of authority from their general Satan. It's your job to cause as much destruction and turmoil and pain and suffering in Iraq or in Syria or in the United States or in Mexico.

Here, this is the prince of Persia. And there's a hierarchy underneath that. And so, we don't know for sure, but in this case, this seemed like a very powerful spirit involved in the life of this young boy. Finally, Jesus mentions prayer and fasting. Again, so he said to them, this kind can only come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

God and I'm going to have to say this at the outset. This one kind of has, I'm a little bit hazy here as exactly what he means.

And so, if we have time, and I think we'll finish up with enough time, if anybody has any other comments or thoughts, I'd love to hear them. So, he references, Jesus references both the power of faith.

[38 : 39] Remember, he told his disciples, if you had faith of a mustard seed, you can do this, but now he's referencing something else, prayer and fasting. This kind only comes out by prayer and

fasting.

So, what does he mean? Does he mean that faith alone is insufficient for this kind? I don't know. None of Jesus' other miracles, and even here, Jesus doesn't pray, he doesn't fast.

he just commands the spirit to come out. He has the authority. It seems that the disciples did not either believe they had, or something to that effect.

But the disciples had received authority over unclean spirits. And what does Jesus mean by prayer and fasting? Does he mean that, well, if you would have just spent some time and prayed without eating any food, then you could have done it.

Is that what he means? Maybe spend the whole afternoon praying, having a prayer meeting, without any food, then the spirit would come out. And I've actually, you know, seen that.

[39 : 54] I think many Christians have practiced that kind of thing because of passages like this. Well, maybe, you know, we have this great thing that we're praying about, we really want an answer from God, we want God to move on our behalf, so let's just spend the whole day or afternoon or even several days, just praying and fasting and we'll see if the Lord might do anything for us.

The only other option, I think, is Jesus is talking about a life lived of prayer and fasting. And that was actually a common thing we see both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

Regular practices of prayer and fasting, to seek after God. We actually just, we looked at Daniel, right, and he was actually not just praying during those three weeks, the Bible says he was also fasting, not fasting all food for three weeks, but certain types of food for three weeks.

We see that in other people, prophets in the Old Testament, they pray and they fast. A lot of times looking for answers. fasting is a way of humbling yourself.

You see a lot of times when people are coming to God, they want to show that they're humbling themselves in a very material way. And so they'll put on sackcloth, which is, you know, just plain clothes, like you're basically in a bag, and put ashes on their head, and then a lot of times we'll fast.

[41 : 33] They won't eat. They'll deprive themselves of just the normal comforts of life as a way to appeal to the Lord, showing their humility and their dependence on him.

But as I asked that question to the disciples, was Jesus, was he expecting them to fast? That seems probably not the case because if you remember, actually, if we go back to Mark chapter 2, which we looked at probably close to a year ago, there's this account where the disciples of John and the Pharisees were asking Jesus, how come your disciples don't fast?

Remember that? Mark chapter 2, verse 18, the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and they said to him, to Jesus, why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?

And Jesus said to them, can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast, but the days will come and the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast in those days.

So it seems like the life of the disciples, Jesus did not expect them to fast. It wasn't part of their spiritual disciplines, if you will, during the time that he was with them.

[42 : 56] And so he was basically saying in this account to the Pharisees, hey listen, fasting is fine, but the bridegroom, God himself, the Messiah is here with them.

It's not the time to fast. They'll do that later. They may have done it before, which is fine. They may do it later, which is also good, but for right now, now is not the time for them to fast.

fast. And so, I don't really have a great answer on exactly what it is here that Jesus is trying to get across to his disciples.

Does he want them to be praying more? Should they be fasting even though he really wasn't teaching them to fast? I'm not quite sure. The last question I'll, or one of the final questions we'll kind of ask here is, well, what about us?

You know, if we're really looking for, you know, God to intervene in our lives, can we receive miracles either by faith or by prayer and fasting?

[44 : 08] And there are plenty who teach that, and of course, we should always be praying, and the Bible says that we should always make our requests known to God.

But I think in this particular circumstance, that we should look at this in the context in which it was written, and Jesus specifically has a miracle ministry with his disciples to the people of Israel.

This is a special time. We've looked at this before, but in the Old Testament, there's a lot of miracles, but that's because they're written about.

Jesus actually says at one point, he says, there were not many miracles, you know, during the time of Israel except for these few. And he mentions how some certain Gentiles actually were healed by the prophets during the time of the prophets.

He says, but other than that, there weren't really any miracles. And so a huge chunk of the Old Testament, there just wasn't much, God wasn't doing much in that realm outside of things like Moses and certain of the prophets to give them credibility in the message that they gave.

[45 : 22] And I think that's a primary reason in which God has established miracle ministries among Moses and some of the prophets and Jesus and even the early apostles to provide credibility to a new message that they're bringing to the people.

You know, in this age in which we live, which is not the age of the kingdom coming, but what Paul calls the age of grace, the administration or the time of the Gentiles, sometimes he'll call it.

We see in the life of Paul, he leaves his buddy Trophimus sick in Miletus. I'm sure Trophimus would have really liked a miracle, but he was doing not well enough, he couldn't even travel, and he said, I had to leave him behind because he was not doing too well.

And he also tells Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake because Timothy was having major stomach problems. Well, where's the miracle ministry that we saw in the life of Jesus?

And even Paul, you know, had a miracle ministry, but in this case, he tells Timothy, hey, here's a natural remedy for you. I'm going to end here.

[46 : 43] What does faith look like for us today? Because we can look back at this time of Jesus and think, oh, this is what real Christian faith looks like.

If I can just maybe believe for a miracle, maybe some sign from heaven, a healing, then I'll have really true, good Christian faith.

But I think we have to understand the time and the season in which we live and what God has called us to. God called his own disciples to basically two objects of faith. One, believe that I'm the Messiah, the one that the prophet spoke of.

Believe in me. As the one that Moses said would come. That the prophet said would come. That I am the Christ and Messiah. And two, I need you to have a miracle ministry and believe in the authority that I've given you to do these things.

But in the age of grace in which we live and which God is handing out grace without the law, without works, he's asking us to believe also two things.

[47 : 50] One, the primary thing is that Jesus died for me. Jesus died for my sins and that is enough for me to have eternal life forever with him.

Believing in Jesus as our Savior. And then two, believing not that we have authority over demons sins or to heal the sick at will though, again, we can always pray and ask God for whatever need we have.

But that our faith, and we see this over and over again, especially in the writings of Paul, that we believe in what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross.

and the identity that we have in him. Paul says this, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We have a life of faith that we are supposed to walk.

We're not supposed to just walk by what we see. We have to live by faith, walk by faith. In Romans 5, 12, I think there's a kind of a good summation here.

[49 : 03] Paul says this, therefore, having been justified by faith, I am righteous by my faith. Because I believe in Jesus, I am righteous.

And we're supposed to believe that. Not just once, but every single day that I am justified. Justified means I've been made righteous before God.

We have peace with God, it continues to say, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And then it says this, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

We stand, not just once, but every single day by faith, believing everything that God said about us. That we are his adopted.

That we are his dearly beloved. That we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Sometimes that's really hard to believe. Sometimes we have to say, after maybe going through a season of sinful wretchedness, we have to turn to God and say, I believe I'm righteous, but God help my unbelief.

[50 : 18] And it is true in context that all things are possible in this age of grace to all who believe.

In the context of grace, right? That any loser drunk who trusts in Christ to be their righteousness can be transformed into a godly man.

Any vile pervert can become an evangelist for the Lord Jesus Christ through his faith in what Jesus did for him.

Even an unhinged man of violence and wrath can become a loving husband and father because he puts his faith in Jesus every single day in what Jesus accomplished for him.

His heart is transformed. Galatians 2.20, I'll end with this, says, I have been crucified with Christ. Do you believe that? I have been crucified with Christ.

[51 : 31] It's no longer I who live, but it's Christ who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

The life we live is a life of faith. And we can be transformed by it. Amen? Amen. Let's take some questions.

We haven't done that in a long time, or comments. I see Joe. He's like chomping at the bit here. Yeah.

Who's my runner? I need a mic runner. Go ahead, Caleb. You got it. You don't need a microphone. I need a microphone. About your fast defense. Yeah. You know, why did he take a fast?

First of all, you mentioned that he took a fast when he wasn't present, you know. Well, Christ is not present now. He's at the right hand of God right now. He's not present. That's true, yeah. All right.

[52 : 28] He's in our hearts, but... One of the best ways to find out how it works for you is to fast. Did you ever think of trying to fast and how that might answer that question for you?

Try fast sometimes. I'll tell you why he wants you to do that. If you try fast and you'll find out. He, you will think so much clearly.

You are alert. You're thinking is right. You physically, you feel great when you fast. Give him the mic. It's magnificent how you can feel when you fast and you're thinking this thing is so fair.

It's sharp. It's all there. It's fast. Now, obviously, if you went too far with it, you know, you'd probably die if you went too far with it. But if you fast, it's wonderful what it does to your mind and how you sit. It's not easy to understand things so clearly and so forth. And physically, you feel so great. I'm actually on a fast. And I'm here this morning.

[53 : 30] Because you know what breakfast is? Breakfast means great fast. Breakfast, great fast. This morning, I ate no breakfast. I'm still fasting.

And I got more of this and more of this. I'm 18 years old. And I would have had if I ate eggs and so forth and so forth. I feel great.

God makes me feel great. All right. Thank you, Joe. Thank you, Joe. It's a wonderful message to you. A great message. And he just couldn't explain that one thing on our fast.

He couldn't see what the fastness of that is to. So God said, Joe, help him out. Help him out. All right. I appreciate it, Joe. Amen. All right.

Thank you, Joe. Yeah, you know, I've seen people get into, I don't know, condemnation when it comes to fasting, you know, trying to get access to the Lord.

[54 : 30] You know, the Bible says that we don't need to do anything extra to get access to God. That there is no condemnation. There's no sin that gets in the way anymore, that we have access to him.

With, the Bible says, boldness. We can access the throne of grace with boldness. One of the benefits, I think, though, of fasting, the Bible talks about two married couples.

It says, there are times and seasons in your married life in which you should both maybe take some time for prayer and fasting. And so, I think there is opportunity for that in the life of a believer.

I think one of the, because I also, actually, I usually fast every breakfast. But it actually frees up your time, right? Eating takes time, doesn't it?

It just does. It takes time, especially if you're cooking. But even just the eating, it takes time. And so, I think one of the benefits of fasting is, hey, you can take that time you would have been eating, and you can use it to fellowship with the Lord.

[55 : 33] Right? And what a great way to use that time. Instead of eating, just talk to God. Tell him how much you love him. Tell him about your needs, about the things going on in your life.

So, any other thoughts? Questions? All right.

Let's end in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you for the light that you give us through the Holy Spirit. We ask you to continually give us light. We want to understand the

scriptures, not just kind of have a meme Christianity or a cliché Christianity, but to actually understand what you would have us to know.

We ask that you would continually give us light as we open up your word and understand what you would have us to know and believe and hold to the promises that we should hold to. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen.