

Starving Your Unbelief

Matthew 17:14-21: *And when they came 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 sore vexed: for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water.

And I brought him to your 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 here 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 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.

However, this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.

I. Disciples were shocked that they were unable to cast out a demon

A. Disciples had previously been successful at casting out demons

Luke 10:17: *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

B. In Matthew 10, Jesus gave the disciples power over unclean spirits
Matthew 10:1: *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease*

C. It was not a lack of faith that blocked the disciples from casting the demon from the boy

D. It was the unbelief of the disciples that prevented them from casting out the demon

Mark 9:14-29: *And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.*

And straightway all the people when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer with you? bring him unto me.

And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

And he asked the father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

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

And when he came into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Matthew 17:21: *Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

II. Prayer and Fasting Required

A. *This kind* is not referring to the demons

B. *This kind* is referring to unbelief

III. Faith the size of a mustard seed can accomplish great things

Matthew 13:31-32: *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

IV. It was not a lack of experience in casting out demons that prevented disciples from casting out demons

V. Jesus did not tell disciples to increase their faith in order to cast out demons, He told them to get rid of unbelief

Matthew 17:19-20: *Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?*

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief:

- A. The size of faith does not negate unbelief
- B. The size of unbelief causes faith not to produce

VI. Effects of Unbelief

- A. Unbelief smothers faith
- B. Unbelief makes faith ineffective
- C. Unbelief causes faith not to produce

VII. Effects of Faith

- A. Faith is powerful enough to move us from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom
- B. Faith is powerful enough to move us from darkness to light
- C. Faith is powerful enough to move us from death to life
- D. Faith is powerful enough to remove mountains in our lives

VIII. Reasons Unbelief Came to the Disciples

- A. A multitude was watching them
 - 1. When casting demons out in the past, there probably was not a multitude watching
 - 2. Disciples probably tempted to think "*If this thing doesn't work, what are they going to think of us?*"

B. The religious leaders were questioning the disciples at the same time that the crowd was watching them

1. Questions being asked of the disciples began to produce

a. doubt

b. unbelief

c. skepticism

2. Religious leaders began to question the authority of the disciples to cast out demons

C. Disciples were moved by their senses

1. Their eyes saw

a. a multitude

b. the young boy fall on the ground wallowing and foaming

2. Their ears heard the questions of the scribes

D. Fear entered the hearts of the disciples because they were moved by their senses

IX. Disciples *TRIED* cast out demons but were not operating in faith, they were operating in doubt

X. Jesus was not moved

A. by the crowds

B. by the questions of the scribes

C. by the boy wallowing and foaming on the ground

D. by the boy appearing as dead after the demon was cast out

E. by unbelief

James 1:6-8: *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Wavering: is the root word for doubt in this verse; means to vacillate between two--between the good report and the bad report

XI. The disciples were double minded and thus did not receive the boy's deliverance

Mark 11:23-24: *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

XII. Strong faith does not overcome unbelief

A. Often faith is being pulled in the wrong direction by unbelief

B. Increasing faith does not negate unbelief

C. Unbelief must be removed

XIII. Two types of Unbelief

Hebrews 12:1: *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*

A. Sin

1. Causes unbelief

2. God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness as we confess our sins to Him

B. Weights

Mark 4:18-19: *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,*

And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

1. When we become so involved with the details of life that the Word is no longer a priority

2. When the lust for other things overshadows the desire for God's Word

XIV. The Seed of Faith

A. The seed of faith does not become smaller because of unbelief

B. The seed of faith can become smothered or choked so that it does not produce

XV. The disciples did not get into unbelief because of sin (ie-adultery, fornication, stealing, etc.); they got into unbelief because of being caught up in the things of life

A. The Word of God began to diminish in their lives

B. Cares/reasonings of life began to become preeminent

II Corinthians 10:5: *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

imaginings: reasonings

C. Reasonings exalt themselves against the knowledge of God

D. Influence of the world surrounding us can come against us through

1. the news

2. magazines

3. newspapers

4. television

5. radio

E. Nothing wrong with the media, keeping up with business forecasts, etc. unless they become more important and more predominant in life than the Word of God

F. Natural reasonings coupled with a decrease in the Word of God will result in unbelief

XVI. Sins committed can be confessed but unbelief resulting from daily exposure to the reasonings of the world result in the type of unbelief that can only be nullified through prayer and fasting

A. This type of unbelief requires a lifestyle change

B. The prayer and fasting does not refer to casting out the demon because if prayer and fasting were necessary to do so, it would require human works rather than God's grace

XVII. Starving Unbelief

A. When unbelief is hindering faith, we need to starve unbelief by saturating ourselves in the Word of God

1. There is nothing wrong with listening to the news
2. There is nothing wrong with listening to music that is not Christian from time to time
3. There is nothing wrong with listening to Rush Limbaugh
4. When faith is hindered, we need to isolate ourselves from the influences of the world for a time

B. Jesus did not isolate Himself from the world but His top priority was the Word

XVIII. Fasting does not necessarily need to be food

- A. We can fast the radio
- B. We can fast music
- C. We can fast the television
- D. We can fast newspapers
- E. We can fast business reports and forecasts

XIX. Fasting does not change God, God is unchangeable

- A. Fasting changes us
- B. Fasting helps us to listen to God, Who is speaking to us all of the time

XX. Unbelief feeds off of the things that surround our lives on a daily basis

XXI. Faith feeds off the Word of God