

Jesus Rebuked a Demon in a Boy

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus taught about the ministry of John the Baptist and how that ministry compares to the future ministry of Elijah during the tribulation. In this topic, we will see that Jesus set a boy free, that was possessed by a demon.

Jesus and the three disciples, Peter, James and John, came down from the mountain where Jesus had been transfigured. A large group of people were gathered around the other disciples when they returned. Matthew 17:14-16 says, “And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ‘Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.’” Here, we see that one of the men in the crowd saw Jesus coming and went and kneeled down in front of Jesus and made a request. He asked Jesus to show mercy.

This man had a son who was suffering greatly. Mark 9:17-18 describes his condition in more detail, as those verses say, “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.’” In these verses, we see that this boy was suffering because of a demon. This demon caused several things to happen in the life of the boy. He could not talk. The demon would throw him to the ground. The demon would cause him to foam at the mouth. The demon would cause him to gnash his teeth (grind his teeth together). The demon would cause him to become rigid. Here, in Matthew 17, we see that the demon also often caused him to fall into the fire and into the water. We see that the goal of this demon was to destroy the life of the child.

That is why the man asked Jesus to show mercy to his son. The man feared that one day that demon would succeed and kill the child. The man wanted Jesus to have mercy and show compassion to his son because of all the things that were happening in the life of the boy because of the demon. Before Jesus had come down from the mountain, the man said that he had brought the boy to the other disciples and they could not cure him. That was why he now said, “Lord, have mercy on my son.” He recognized Jesus as Lord because he felt that Jesus was the only One who could help his son. The fact that the man recognized Jesus as Lord showed his faith, and we read what Jesus said and did because of that faith, in contrast to the lack of faith of others. Matthew 17:17-18 says, “Then Jesus answered and said, ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.’ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.”

Jesus began by using two words to describe that generation. We will see by the question that the disciples asked Jesus, in verse 19, that they were also described by those words. First, Jesus said

that generation was “a faithless generation”. The word translated “faithless” means *unbelieving or without trust in God*. Jesus had given the twelve, and later the seventy, the power to cast out demons when He sent them out to preach the Gospel in various towns and cities. Luke 10:17 says, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’” On their ministry trips, they saw the Lord cast out demons because they had trusted in Him at that time. In this case, they may have tried to cast out the demons in their own strength, instead of depending on the strength of the Lord to cast out the demons.

Second, Jesus said that generation was a “perverse generation”. The word translated “perverse” means *to turn aside from the purposes and plans of God*. This is a reminder that even the disciples were to pray according to the will of God. 1 John 5:14-15 says, “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.” These verses show that when we pray, we are to pray according to the will of God. The fact that Jesus later healed this boy shows that it was the will of God for him to be healed. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” When we depend on our own strength, we will not bring glory to God. We will see later that the disciples asked why they could not cast out the demon. In the answer of Jesus, we see that he tells them how to bring glory to God.

Jesus then asked the question, “How long shall I be with you?” The disciples did not understand that Jesus was preparing them for future ministry when He would no longer be physically present with them. They needed to learn to serve the Lord in the strength that the Lord provides and not in their own strength. Jesus later said, as He ate the Passover with the disciples, in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” In the same way, we will accomplish nothing when we depend on our own strength.

Then, Jesus told the man to bring the boy to Him. Luke 9:42 says, “And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed *him*. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.” In this verse, we see that the demon made one final effort to try and destroy the boy as the father was bringing him to Jesus. The demon threw the boy down and caused him to go into convulsions as a part of that final effort to destroy him. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” The goal of Satan is always to steal, to kill and to destroy. This verse shows that demons have this same goal.

In contrast, the goal of Jesus is to give spiritual life. Jesus just rebuked the demon and the demon was forced to come out of the boy. We see that the boy was cured from that very hour. The word translated “cured” means *to be restored to health*. That day, the boy left Jesus a normal, healthy boy. However, the disciples had some questions. Matthew 17:19-21 says, “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ 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.” The disciples had cast out demons when Jesus sent them out on the ministry trip. As a result, they wanted to know why they could not cast out the demon this time. Jesus explained the faith that brings glory to God.

Jesus explained that they could not cast out the demon because of their unbelief. The disciples had cast out demons, through the power of God, when they were sent out two-by-two because they said that the demons were subject in Jesus name. Here, the disciples said, “Why could we not cast it out?” This is an indication that they depended on their own strength to cast out the demon, instead of praying and asking the Lord to cast out the demon. Joshua had done the same thing after the great victory at Jericho. Joshua 7:3-4 says, “And they returned to Joshua and said to him, ‘Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are few.*’ So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.” Joshua had depended on the counsel of the spies instead of asking God what to do.

Jesus told the disciples that this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. The word translated “kind” is used to speak of a family, a nation, or a group of the same nature. In Acts 17:28-29, we read, “For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.” Here, the word is twice translated “offspring”. Angels are spirits created by God and divide into two groups, the good and the fallen. Since they are creations of God, He is the only One who has power to cast them out, so that is why Jesus said this kind only comes out by prayer and fasting.

Jesus also taught the difference between great faith and faith in a great God. A mustard seed is the smallest seed in the land of Israel. As a result, the need of the disciples was not a great faith in their own strength. Instead, they needed only enough faith to pray and ask God to work in the life of one who was demon-possessed. God is a Great God and He has all power over all demons. 1 John 4:4 says, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” A little child, who is loved by his earthly father, has faith in him. In the same way, as the children of God, He wants us to have faith in Him.

We demonstrate that faith in Him by coming to Him in prayer and thanksgiving for our requests. Philippians 4:6 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Our prayer and supplications to God demonstrate our dependence on God, instead of our own strength. Our thanksgiving to God shows our faith in God because we ask Him to do what He knows is best. Romans 8:27 says, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*” We want to show our physical and spiritual children our dependence on the Lord, to do His will in all things, by the example that we provide for them by our own prayers and thanksgiving to the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show these things to your children, by your example.

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