

## Living the Supernatural Life: Part 10 – Spiritual Preparation

1. Matthew 17: 14 *“When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, 15 “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 “I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.” 17 And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” 18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” 20 And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. 21 “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”*
  - a. This passage ought to make us sit up in our seats for a number of reasons. If not for the fact that a demon possessed boy is delivered and healed, if not for the fact that Jesus rebukes the crowd as well as his disciples, then at least for the fact that Jesus tells us that some spiritual work will require intense preparation.
  - b. Context: Jesus, Peter, James and John have just come down from the mount of Transfiguration. They have left the other 9 disciples behind and they had been approached by a father whose son was terribly afflicted by a demon. These nine disciples are unable to deliver the boy from his affliction, so the man comes to Jesus who literally “rebukes” the demon (using the same term as in Matthew 8:26 *“Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm”*).
    - i. Notice several things:
      1. Jesus does not “pray the demon out.”
      2. Jesus does not “ask the Father to remove the demon”
      3. In “rebuking” the demon, he is commanding it to depart. In the literal sense, he is “judging” the demon.
      4. The demon leaves immediately. Wow, what a difference from the previous situation.
    - ii. Now the boy’s symptoms have been compared by some to epileptic seizures, but that doesn’t change the fact that Jesus took authority over the source of the boy’s affliction and commanded it to let go of its hold upon him. The bible says “the demon came out of him.”
      1. Have you ever seen a person afflicted by a demon? You probably have and just didn’t realize it. Jennifer and I were a part of a small group that met each week in Ft. Worth and a woman visited our group one week. The demon began to manifest itself during a time of prayer...and several people had to take her aside while the rest of us prayed for the deliverance.
      2. I have to admit, I recall my feeling of vulnerability and inexperience when we witnessed this manifestation. I rather imagine the disciples probably felt a bit unprepared for what they saw as well. I wouldn’t be surprised that if a person manifested demonic spirits during our services that most of us here would be looking for the door!
      3. Yet, do we have any reason to be afraid? NO.
      4. Do we have the authority over these things? Yes.
      5. But are we prepared for them? The answer is likely no.
2. I want you to look at what happened afterward, during Jesus’ “debriefing” time with his disciples. That is the cool thing about Jesus, he would take his followers aside and explain stuff to them and help them understand what was going on.
  - a. *19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” 20 And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith*

*the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. 21 "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."*

- b. They wanted to know “why they couldn’t drive it out.” Jesus gave them what appears to be two answers bundled into one.
  - c. “Because of the smallness of your faith.”
    - i. Oligopiston (small, brief, short in intensity + faith). Different than “apistas” which is “negative faith” for which he rebukes them at other times. ..
    - ii. Why is this so significant?
    - iii. *If I were to take a candle wick, one that is not yet been combined with wax, and light it, what would it do? It would burn itself up. And it would fail to do what it is designed to do, because it lacks wax to fuel it. This is the briefness or short in intensity that we are speaking of faith.*
    - iv. *Jesus was saying that His disciple’s faith was very brief*, short in intensity because it wasn’t being fortified (by prayer and fasting). If they had faith that was only the size of a mustard seed (with the potential inside it) then nothing would be impossible for them. But their faith was not even that big. It was totally reliant upon what they were seeing.
3. How did Jesus drive it out? Had he been fasting? (yes, but when?).
- a. **“Fasting and prayer” is a buzzword to mean spiritual preparation.**
    - i. We just read this entire passage about the healing of this possessed boy...did you hear me read anything about Jesus saying a prayer to drive this demon out?
    - ii. So, what did Jesus mean then when He said that it can only come out by prayer?
  - b. Preparation: - quote on prayer –*“The reason why many fail in battle is because they wait until the hour of battle. The reason why others succeed is because they have gained their victory on their knees long before the battle came...Anticipate your battles; fight them on your knees before temptation comes, and you will always have victory.”* R. A. Torrey
  - c. **Preparation is the key to unleashing supernatural power –**
    - i. Preparation is the key to a linebacker being able to tackle the 230 lb running back. His power to stop him is directly related to his preparation that has come about through his lifting of weights, practice and study of his opponent.
  - d. *I don’t know how many of you use batteries often, but they have come up with a quick way to see how much life is left in your battery. It’s called a power strip, to activate it, we need only to touch two dots on opposite ends of the battery and we will soon see the amount of power we have left. **If we, as Christians were equipped with such a device, what would yours be reading right now?** Well, if you don’t regularly seek guidance through the study of God’s word.....and your prayer life is fleeting to non-existent.....then chances are your power strip is reading on the lower end of the scale.*
    - i. Without that power strip on the side of the battery, we can’t tell just by looking how much power is in it can we?
    - ii. I mean it “looks” like a good battery but what counts is not what we see, but what’s on the inside...
    - iii. Try to use a discharged battery and you will be disappointed...not unlike the 9 disciples who were trying to cast out a demon from a child.
  - e. Now Jesus knew this great value of fasting, and it seems that He developed a lifestyle of prayer and fasting.
    - i. It’s clear He’d been fasting prior to this incident with the demon-possessed boy .
    - ii. He cast it out and said the reason He’d been able to was because “this kind only come out by prayer and fasting”.
    - iii. What’s the implication? **Jesus had a lifestyle of fasting and prayer.** Jesus kept his spiritual batteries fully charged.

- f. God has an unlimited amount of power that He is just waiting to put at our disposal, but we have to believe that it's there, and we must plug into Him to utilize that power.
  - i. We cannot expect God to "arc" his power across the universe of time and space if we are not willing to touch terminals with Him. That is the role of prayer and fasting.
  - ii. Last month, many of us personally experienced the humbling effect that fasting brings along with the intense time of prayer, journaling and spending time with Jesus.
  - iii. Are you willing to make a lifestyle of it? Are you willing to fast and pray regularly?
4. There is a true story of a police officer who was ordered by his sergeant to go with his partner to visit certain pubs in the area to make sure that there weren't any problems and that they were shutting down on time. They would enter the pubs at around 11pm speak to the Landlord or Landlady and make sure that everybody was getting ready to leave. One pub they went to was in a place called Middlewich, England. It was a pub that had a little bit of a bad reputation. They had already been in two pubs and hadn't had any trouble. Here is how he tells the story:
  - a. But when we walked into this pub, the moment that we went through the doors it was like a scene from a Wild West movie where strangers walk into a bar. The place went silent and everybody turned and looked at us. The place was full of around 30 to 40 men who started to gather around us. Undeterred we made our way to the back to speak to the Land Lady. As we did so we had to push past people and people weren't going to move for us. When we got to the back I turned around and suddenly realized that I was at the back of the pub, at the furthest point away possible from the door. The crowd gathered around us and we realized that there was likely to be trouble. One man came up to me nose to nose. He had a large scar, that looked fairly recent, that went all the way from his forehead to his chin. He looked at me menacingly, pointed at his scar, and said, 'Do you want to find out how I got this.' I politely replied 'No thank you, I'm busy.' At this point both my colleague and I were completely surrounded. The men gathered around, all of whom were big fighting men, stood around us staring at us. They were making it very clear that if we even tried to clear this pub, we were going to get our heads made to look like mashed potato. We spoke to the Landlady, made some excuse, and made our way out of the pub, having to push through the crowd. As we went back they were jostling us slightly. Thankfully, we managed to get out safely without having to fight, or without having to run and losing all dignity.
  - b. At this point we called up our Sergeant on the radio and let him know what had happened. He was indignant that two of his officers had been intimidated out of a pub in such a way he came with us while we visited the pub once again. This time he had brought at least a dozen other officers to join us as well as a rather large snarling police dog. Myself and my colleague entered the pub again and were greeted by the same reception. At this point somebody opened the doors and all of a sudden all those inside the pub could see a line of police cars waiting outside, as well as dog who was frantic to be let off his lead. You have never seen a pub empty out as quickly, quietly or peacefully as it did that night. The same men who moments earlier had been waiting to lay into me and my colleague, left the pub with their heads down, and without uttering a whisper.
  - c. What was the difference between the first time that they entered into the pub and the second time? The answer is that the second time they entered in with real power.
    - i. You see as officers of the law they had already been given power and authority. They had been given the authority, as servants of the Queen, to enter that public house and to clear it because it was after hours. They even had a certain amount of power. They were both trained in self defense, they were both carrying batons, pepper spray, and handcuffs. **However they realized the limitations of their own power.** As a result they had to request back up. They had to humble themselves enough to realize that they couldn't handle the situation by themselves.
    - ii. When you fast and pray, that is exactly what you are doing. You have been given the authority of the situation, yet you are admitting that you can't handle it in your own power. You are asking God to release the power of heaven. You are claiming the promise that "He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world."

- iii. When we ask for His power, just as the officer was able to request “back up”, we have access to all the power of heaven itself. We just have to humble ourselves and ask for it. There is no opposition that can stand against that kind of power. When you pray in this way, when you are acting within the authority given to you, then you will see your problem disappear with its tail between its legs, and without it murmuring a word.
- 5. Perhaps today you are bearing a burden or a problem that is too big for you. Won't you humble yourself and acknowledge that you need help? God is big enough to carry you, but you must come before Him and let Him know you can't do it alone. There is no better place to be in. Are you willing to pray and to fast and to seek God's face? There is where the supernatural life resides!