"Keys to Spiritual Power"

Matthew 17:14-21
2-22-2026

INTRODUCTION: Verses 14-19

1. A desperate man (v. 14-16)

   a. His son's condition was critical and apparently helpless

   b. Others had tried to help but failed

2. A doubtful man (v. 17; Mark 9:22, 24)

Three Keys to Power Over the Impossible:

I. FAITH (v. 20)
(Total confidence in God's power)

II. PRAYER (v. 21a)
(Total dependence on God's power)

III. FASTING (v. 21b)
(Total desperation for God's power)



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1. A <u>desperate</u> man (v. 14-16)

V. 14

"Kneeling down" - In desperation the man races over to Jesus, falls down on His knees and tells Jesus His plight.

V. 15
"Mercy" = compassionate pity

"My son" - This young boy (perhaps a teen) was the father's ***"<u>only</u>"*** son (Lk. 9:38), and he had this demonic possession ever since he was a *"child"* (Mk. 9:21).

a. His son's condition was critical and apparently helpless

V. 15
"Lunatick" - lit. moonstruck; the boy had wild, out of control epileptic fits, which in ancient days the people thought was somehow mysteriously influenced by the moon (Vine, p. 37).

Mark and Luke's gospels give more details concerning the frenzied, irrational behavior of this poor young soul.

1) The boy couldn't speak because of a demonic spirit which cased him to be mute and deaf (Mk. 9:17, 25).

2) The boy would suddenly be seized (or grabbed) by the demon, which would take over the boy's "motor skills" and the spirit would tear at him, dashing him to the ground (Mk. 9:18a).

3) The boy would foam at the mouth (sending saliva flowing down the child's face) and would grind his teeth (in pain) (Mk. 9:18b).

4) The boy would stiffen out and become rigid (*"pineth away"* - KJV - Mk. 9:18c).

5) The boy would suddenly and uncontrollably cry out (Lk. 9:39).

6) The demonic spirit would rarely (*"scarcely"*) ever leave the child but would maul him, continually leaving him black and blue with bruises (Lk. 9:39).

"Sore vexed" - really bad off

Often, in an attempt to destroy the boy, the demon would compel him to fall into fire (to burn him to death), or into water (to drawn him).

(Satan, *"the thief cometh. . . to kill and to destroy"* - Jn. 10:10).

b. Others had tried to help but failed

V. 16

"<u>Thy</u> disciples" - This man implicitly connects Jesus to the impotency of his disciples.

"They could not cure him" - And no man can do that which is in the realm of the supernatural. This was a case only God could cure!

2. A <u>doubtful</u> man (v. 17; Mark 9:22, 24)

V. 17

"Then Jesus answered" -

Mark 9:19 - says *"He answered <u>him</u>"* - He directed His comment toward this man as well as the crowd (including the scribes and His own disciples).

SEE: Mark 9:22, 24

"If thou canst do anything. . ." (v. 22) - This father did not say, "If you but he questions Christ's <u>ability</u>.

"Faithless" = to be without belief; to be without trust (more and more this seems to describe our generation).

"Perverse" = to be perverted by someone; to be distorted or twisted. The idea here is that this people to whom Jesus is speaking had been turned aside from a strong confidence in Christ.

"How long" - Jesus had been proving Himself for months and months with indisputable miracles, and yet the hardness of men's hearts would not let the truth of who He was sink in.

V. 18

At Jesus rebuke of the demon, the child was released:

1) <u>Completely</u>
2) <u>Permanently</u>

And 3) <u>Instantly</u> (after one last shove - Mk. 9:26)

V. 19

"Apart" - Perhaps with shame and embarrassment, the disciples in privacy ask Jesus why they had failed.

Part of the answer to their question was in their question itself. (***"We")**

It is faith in God not in yourself.

***Three Keys to Power Over the Impossible:**

I. FAITH (v. 20)
(Total confidence in God's power)

"Unbelief" = the problem was not (as the critical text implies) a smallness of faith. Rather, their problem was an absence of faith (for Jesus in this very verse tells what a little faith (in the right Person) could accomplish.

"Mustard seed" - known for its smallness among the plant seeds.

It's not the size of your faith, it's the genuineness, sincerity, and right object of your faith that ***"moves mountains"***!

"Nothing shall be impossible" - That is, nothing outside of the will of God (cp. Paul's thorn remained - II Cor. 12). (You cannot possibly have real faith in an unBiblical request).

Heb. 11:6 - *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"*

"Faith honors God and therefore God honors faith."

"Belief" is a major prerequisite to answered prayer.

Mark 11:24 - *"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire,m when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."*

James 1:6-7 - *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."*

How dare we question the ability of the One who created the universe!

How could we question the power of the One who has adequately proven Himself able in the past?

We need the "Faith of our Fathers"!

II. PRAYER (v. 21a)

(Total dependence on God's power)

This text, though omitted in the critical text, was nonetheless clearly stated by Christ (SEE: Mark 9:29).

"This kind" - This supernatural kind of Satanic grip on a person's life; this impossible kind; this hard kind; this humanly hopeless kind.

"Prayer" = points to serious, purposeful prayer. Not nonchalant, half-hearted chatter to God, but an intensity of a soul that pours out his request with humility, dependency, fervency, and faith!

Did you know that there is one thing that astonishes (amazes) God?

Isaiah 59:16 - *"And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessors: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him."*

Note: Even in urgent times like these, we have less praying going on than ever!

God was shocked (astonished) at Israel's prayerlessness when the need for prayer was so great (Is. 59:16).

We need to be people of real prayer before a time of crisis in order to be effective pray-ers in a time of crisis.

"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (accomplishes much)" (Ja. 5:16).

"Call unto Me and I will answer thee and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jer. 33:3).

Prayer unites puny man to the omnipotent God.

Prayer is most essential, the most needed activity, yet often the most neglected.

The most important person in any church is the one who prays the most.
The most influential person in any church is the one who prays the most.
(Dr. Bob Jones III)

What was it that brought the Communist wall down in Russia? The sovereign God of Heaven was no doubt moved by the prayers of His praying Russian saints (Prayer unleashes the power of God).

Although God is sovereign and does according to His will, prayer changes things!

Mysteriously, prayer moves God to work on our behalf, to do that which we cannot do by human power and wisdom.

(SEE: II Chron. 20:3-12, 15 - the prayer of Jehoshaphat)

III. FASTING (v. 21b)

(Total desperation for God's power)

"Fasting" **-** The Greek word translated "fasting" is nesteia (ne = a negative prefix; and esthio = to eat); hence, the word means to "not eat"

"Fasting" was (and is) a voluntary abstinence from eating food so as to spend the time normally spend in preparing and consuming food in prayer.

Note: Food preparation was a process which demanded more time than in our instant-microwave society.

"Fasting" and "Prayer" are constantly tied together (Ezra 8:23; Neh. 1:4; Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:292; Acts 13:3; I Cor. 7:5)

You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast Biblically without praying. Fasting is an affirmation of intense prayer, a corollary of deep spiritual struggle before God. It is never an isolated act of a ceremony or ritual that has some inherent efficacy or merit" (MacArthur, p. 404).

"Fasting" is most often practiced when someone is so burdened (upset) with something that food has no appeal. Their heart is focused on an urgent need so the person mourns and cries out to God for help. Ex: David for his son (II Sam. 12:16, 22); Nehemiah for God's city (Neh. 1:4).

"Fasting" is the response of a burdened or broken heart that is so absorbed with the interests of others or the will of God that one sets aside his own needs and desires and humbles himself and cries out to God with a sincere heart for mercy.

"Fasting" is never a command for a N.T. believer. Jesus said men ought "*always to pray*" but not men ought "always to fast." The words ***"When ye fast"*** assume that believers will do so in their life, but does not command it.

"Fasting" **-** Points to the intensity of the felt need. To be so overwhelmed, so burdened, so distressed with a need for the mighty hand of god that food (or any earthly pleasure) is the farthest thing from your mind.

God never commands us to *"fast"* but He says when you do, do so sincerely (Mt. 6:16-18) and not with ulterior motives (EX: health and dietary reasons).

CONCLUSION:

When was the last time you were so burdened for a ....

lost relative,
a wayward teen,
a deeply hurting person,
a satanically-deceived backslider,

...That your mind fled the mundane (food, etc.) and was obsessed with the need to grip onto God?