

## Unlimiting God – Part 5

### Help My Unbelief!

Sunday Morning, July 2, 2017

Today's message, as with the preceding messages, have been based upon the book "Unlimiting God" by Richard Blackaby. Today we're looking at Part 5 – "Help My Unbelief!".

The Gospels record a troubling moment when Jesus's disciples reached the limit of God's power in their lives. Their public ministry had begun well, as Jesus gave them power and authority to cast out evil spirits.

#### **(Mark 6:7)**

And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.

God's power can liberate people from illness, demon-possession, fear, pride, anger or any bondage sin brings. When Jesus sent his disciples out 2 by 2 throughout the countryside, it was to set people free.

Their mission was extremely successful. They cast out many demons and healed numerous sick people.

#### **(Mark 6:13)**

And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.

They preached the gospel and saw many repent of their sin. But later when Jesus was away with Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, a desperate father brought his only son to the other 9 disciples. This boy's problem proved more than they could handle. Jesus's disciples had clearly been given the power to cast out unclean spirits. They had done it many times before. But on this occasion, all 9 of these disciples were stymied. Turn to **(Mark 9: 14 – 19)**.

**(Mark 9: 14 – 19)**

14 And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.

15 Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him.

16 And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.

18 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.”

19 He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.”

After the situation is explained to Jesus He gave a startling rebuke in verse 19.

“O faithless generation

His reprimand was directed at faithlessness.

Jesus promptly set the enslaved boy free. Later, in private, the distressed disciples asked Jesus why they’d been so helpless. In **(Mark 9:29)** we see His response:

So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Jesus was declaring that this particular situation was indeed difficult,  
but not impossible.

Frankly, I’m grateful for Jesus’s acknowledgment that some situations are more challenging than others. Some people espouse the belief that everything in the Christian life is easy if you have sufficient faith.

Yet Jesus recognized that some kinds of bondage can be overcome only through prayer and fasting.

This event revealed what the disciples had not been doing.

The first place God points to when we face difficulties is our prayer life.

Jesus would point us to the same place He directed His disciples, prayer. If you come across a difficult situation, start praying.

Jesus also recommended fasting.

Fasting involves setting aside normal routines and focusing on God and His answer for your situation. It entails sacrifice.

The disciples' problem was that they believed they'd encountered a problem too difficult for God's power. They'd given up. There's no situation more hopeless than when God's people give up on someone. The disciples were undoubtedly embarrassed at their failure. Rather than persevering in their efforts to free the boy, they became embroiled in an argument with the scribes as they defended their tarnished reputations. Their failure to heal the boy implied that some cases were too difficult even for God. Put another way, the disciples believed there was a limit to what God's power could do. Even though they had just previously witnessed Jesus calm the wind and sea and deliver a man possessed by a Legion of Demons. I can imagine their thoughts and conversations after their failure "Wow! Satan really has a stronghold in that boy's life! You can't help people who don't want to be helped." Meanwhile, the boy convulsed on the ground.

By contrast, look closely at how Jesus responded when the boy was brought to Him in

**(Mark 9: 20 – 27)**

**(Mark 9: 20 – 27)**

**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.

**21** So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

And he said, “From childhood.

**22** 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.”

**23** Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

**24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

**25** 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!”

**26** 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.”

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

Did you see what Jesus said in verse 23?

**23** Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

And the father’s response in verse 24? Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

The father did have some faith, but his faith hadn’t been at a level to see God’s work miraculously in his son’s life. There was a limit to the man’s belief in what God could do. When this man heard Jesus’s response, he didn’t offer excuses. He didn’t complain about the failure of the Jesus’s disciples. Instead he pleaded with Jesus to raise the level of his own faith to a place where God would be pleased to set his son free.

For in a sense, the limit to the father’s faith had been costing the son his freedom.

Could it be that the limits of your faith have been costing others around you? \_\_\_\_\_

As a husband, father and Pastor, I don't want my lack of unbelief in what God can do to prevent those I love from experiencing God's power and deliverance.

We all need to pray regularly along the same lines as the father...

*"Lord, I do have faith in You, but raise my faith in You to a higher level so those I pray for and minister to can experience Your power in an even greater degree."*

The principle we can learn from this even in Mark chapter 9 is:

God gives to us according to our faith.

It's easy to believe God for generalities, it's much harder to trust Him for specifics.

"I believe God is omnipotent." *(general)*

I believe God can heal a demon-possessed boy on the ground in front of me." *(specific)*

The second more specific one takes more faith.

The disciples believed God in general, but they failed to trust Him for this specific situation. Likewise, it's easy to praise God for His power and love during a Sunday Worship Service. It's quite another thing to trust that power and love as we head into our week filled with work, trials, problems and stressful situations.

Have you set a limit on what you believe God can do in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

There are several ways to tell:

1. Have you given up on someone or yourself?
2. Do you have a constant struggle, sinful habit, ungodly attitude or area of defeat in your life?
3. Does your painful past keep causing you heartache?
4. Have you prayed regularly for another person's salvation, but after witnessing and inviting them to church without result, you gave up and began focusing on someone else instead?
5. Does someone you know live a destructive lifestyle and you have prayed for them and pleaded with them and yet they persist in their sin. After years of frustration you gave up on them?

When you give up like that, you're saying loud and clear, "I don't believe God's power is adequate to make a difference in this situation."

So, I want to remind you of what I said earlier...God's power can liberate people we know or ourselves from illness, demon-possession, fear, pride, anger or any bondage of sin.

Today, let's go home focusing on this fact and ask God to help our unbelief. Let's unlimit God in our lives by increasing our faith in Him and what He can do!