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Demonized Boy (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the story of the demonized boy from the Bible and provides his insights on the subject of demonization. He questions the age of the boy and whether demons can be inherited through generations. Gregg notes that faith is preferable, but lack of faith is not a limitation for God. He also talks about the role of prayer and fasting in casting out demons and how fasting can become incidental. Ultimately, Gregg believes that healing and exorcism referred to in the Bible actually happened.

Transcript

Also, in this case, when Jesus asks how long has the boy been like this, it's possible that Jesus didn't need the information, and as far as we know, he didn't make any use of it. And it's probable, you know, we don't know if Jesus even didn't already know. I mean, Jesus, when he came to earth as a man, he did lay aside some of his divine attributes, including his omniscience.

At the same time, however, he exhibited the gift of the word of knowledge or prophetic insight into people's life. And he could have even, you know, had insight into this situation without asking. We don't know.

I guess all we can say is we don't know if Jesus was seeking information for his own sake here, or whether he wanted this man to testify that the boy's condition had been lifelong, simply because it would underscore the depth of the problem and the persistence of the problem, and would therefore, when Jesus cast it out permanently, would show what a great miracle it was, because it had been a lifelong problem. When people are cured of conditions that have been lifelong, for some reason that just seems more impressive. In the story of the man born blind in John chapter 9, it's either there or it's in Luke 3, where a lame man was healed.

I don't remember if it was the man born blind or the lame man, but one of those accounts makes a point of saying, you know, the miracle made a great impression on everyone because the man was over 40 years old, implying that his condition had been

that long, and somehow that makes it more impressive when it's healed than if it was just a short-lived thing. So maybe that's why Jesus asked how long has this been happening. It seems a strange question to have to ask at a time like that, when the boy's in danger of being thrown into the fire or the water, if there's any nearby.

But the answer is intriguing, because he said, from childhood. Now, we don't know how old the boy was at the time that he encountered Jesus here. As I said, the Greek word that's used in both Matthew and Luke, which is translated child in the New King James, doesn't necessarily mean a little child, but it can.

And if this boy was, in fact, a little child, then when his father said he's been like this from childhood, it would mean from extremely young childhood. Now, if this was a young man now, and Jesus said from childhood, it'd be very, I mean, the man said from childhood, it'd be a very unspecific answer. It would just mean sometime in his childhood, sometime before his bar mitzvah, sometime in the first 12 years of his life this happened.

But that would be, I mean, if Jesus needed information on that, that wouldn't be a very helpful answer, because it's not specific. He should have said from this age or that age. On the other hand, if the boy was fairly young and still a child, and the man just said from childhood, it would have a meaning sort of like from always, you know, I've never known him otherwise.

It seems like he's always been this way. Now, once again, I don't want to read more into there than is justified, but there is a belief held among very many people who have experience in dealing with demon-possessed people, that some people are born demon-possessed. Whether this boy was or not, we cannot say.

I mean, the Bible doesn't say, and we can't be dogmatic where it's silent. Although if the man's answer from childhood is just a sort of a way of saying, as long as we can remember, he's always been this way, since he didn't give a specific age, which would be the natural way to answer Jesus' question. If there was some specific age where the onset occurred, you'd expect a man to say, well, we remember the first time it happened was when he was age four or six or whatever.

But the man is very unspecific, which might just be his way of saying forever, you know, he's always been this way. Can't remember a time when he wasn't. And it might be that this boy was actually born in that condition.

I have heard of many modern cases of persons who were delivered from demons who firmly believed, and those who ministered to them firmly believed, that that person was born in that condition. In many cases, they were people born in a family where there was a great deal of occultism practiced, sometimes for many generations. There are some who believe that demons can be born in several generations in a row into children.

The suggestion obviously raises an immediate sentimental objection, and that would be, you know, how could there be any such injustice that an innocent baby would be born with this problem of demon possession? And yet, it only takes a moment's consideration to realize that, justice or not, babies are born handicapped in many ways, mentally, physically, and for all we know, maybe spiritually as well. All I can say is the very injustice of it is no argument against the possibility. It seems unjust for a baby to be born with cystic fibrosis or with some other major, you know, sickness.

But whoever said the devil was just, or that the devil played fair? I mean, demons are clearly devilish, and the demons are not nice guys, and the devil's not a nice guy, and he doesn't care about what's fair. And therefore, the fact that our emotional revolt against it might incline to say, oh no, no way could a baby be born demon-possessed, is no proof against it. At the same time, we have no biblical proof for it.

All I can say is that I've read from many anecdotal stories of missionaries of every denominational stripe. I'm not just talking about wild-eyed Pentecostal deliverance ministry types. I mean, I'm talking about Baptist and Methodist missionaries and others who have been convinced that they've been dealing with some people who are possessed from their birth.

A relatively well-known and fairly well-respected expert on demonization, a guy named Kurt Kopf, a German theologian, has written many books on this subject, and I remember he was dealing in the Philippines once with a Bible college student there who was demonized. Whether the man was a Christian or not, that is, the demon-possessed person was a Christian or not, no one could say for sure, but he was a Bible student at the college in Manila, I believe, and in interviewing this person before casting the demon out, Kurt Kopf determined, whether we can take it at face value or not, that the demons had been in this boy's family for 300 years and that it had been sort of a generational thing. Now, I always have skepticism when people talk about generational sins and generational bondages and stuff, because it seems to me like it's easy for us to blame our sins on our parents or our grandparents or someone else.

It seems like it's sort of the rage to find someone to blame other than ourselves for our problems. But it is not contrary to Scripture, as far as I know, to suggest the possibility for people to have demons in the family that pass from parent to child. I knew a girl in Santa Cruz whose parents were both high-ranking priests and priestesses in the satanic church.

She believes that she was born demon-possessed, and when she got saved, she got delivered as well from demons, whether she was right or not about being born that way. Again, one of the problems with this is without the Bible telling us so, we're stuck with anecdotal material, you know, and sometimes the interpretations of their own experience by the people who are possessed and who's to say they got it right. But this

is a case, at least, in this story of someone who, as a child, even we'd have to say an innocent child, a very young child, came to be possessed, whether born that way or at an early age, seems equally unfair, you know.

I mean, and it underscores the fact that demons don't play fair and that the innocence of a child doesn't necessarily exempt them from this kind of abuse from the devil. Now, the man continues to answer the question in verse 22. He says, 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. Now, the man said, if you can do anything, and Jesus' answer is rendered differently in the Alexandrian text than in the Textus Receptus. The version I'm reading here, of course, uses the Textus Receptus, and Jesus' response is, if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.

But in the Alexandrian text, the word believe, in the first instance, is not found. So, it reads, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes. Now, even if that's the correct reading, and there's no way to know for sure if it is, because we can't settle the matter of these texts, but suppose we take the Alexandrian text as correct in this case, which it may not be, then Jesus' answer is, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes.

Now, that might mean the same thing as, if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes, but many modern translators have felt, and I think if you have a modern translation, it may even be reflected in the text, that the statement, if you can, should have an exclamation point after it, and question mark, like Jesus saying, what do you mean if I can? You know, if you can, see the man said, if you can do anything, and Jesus' response would be, if you can, meaning quoting back to him what he had said to do, if I can is the implication, what do you mean if I can? Anything's possible to him who has faith. It could be the way Jesus responded. I only say that because some of you may have modern translations that render it that way, and you might wonder why it's so different than the way we read it here in the New King James.

It's because of a textual difference. There is, in the Alexandrian text, it says, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes, whereas here, if you can believe, where he's clearly talking about if the man is capable of believing, all things are possible to him who believes. Now, immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe.

Help my unbelief. Now, the word of faith people would tell us that, you know, if you're not making a positive confession, if you're not having faith in your faith and so forth, that you just can't get anything done. But this man admitted they had weak faith.

He admitted his faith needed help. He had unbelief. And yet we find Jesus did the miracle

for him.

Jesus did for him what he asked. The man said, help my unbelief. And no doubt by Jesus doing what he did, it did help the man's unbelief.

I'm sure that it made a profound impression on his ability to believe that Jesus could do everything because he wasn't sure of that when he first approached Jesus. And I'm sure that when the boy was finally delivered, that that had a profound impression on the man's faith. And no doubt this prayer, help my unbelief, was answered by Jesus going ahead and doing for the man what he asked.

But he didn't do it for the man because of his faith. He did it for some other reason. He did it just sovereignly.

And again, it would point out that even though the disciples were unable to cast out the demon because of unbelief, and this man also suffered from the affliction of unbelief, yet Jesus was still able to answer a prayer even uttered in weak faith, even uttered in little faith. And that's because Jesus had great faith. Jesus fully trusted his Father to do whatever he asked him to do.

So the man, you know, it's an encouraging thing really for those who consider themselves to be weak in faith to see that this man was self-admittedly very weak in faith. But that's generally not the case. James says, if one wavers in his faith, he should not think that he'll receive anything from the Lord.

Generally speaking, certainly God prefers that we have faith, but he's not limited by our lack of faith apparently. This man's faith was not great. Neither was the faith of the disciples.

There's no one there with faith except Jesus himself, it would appear. So when Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit. Now, this statement, when Jesus saw that people came running together, it means that he saw the crowd was gathering.

And rather than waiting for the crowd to gather so he could do this in a spectacular show to a great multitude, the fact the crowd was gathering made him want to get it hastily done and wait no longer because he didn't want it to be done before a large crowd, it seems to be implied. Most of us would say, well, let's wait till these others are here so they can all see and then we'll do what we can do, you know. We'd like to have as many people as possible know that I can do this kind of thing.

But instead, the man wanted to guard the man's privacy, no doubt. And it was, after all, an unflattering moment for the young man or boy, I mean, to be having a fit. I mean, I've often thought, you know, when I see people having epileptic seizures, how demeaning it is, how if it were me, I'd be so embarrassed to have people see me so out of control or

something, you know.

That's my pride, I'm sure. But I would imagine it's a very humiliating thing for those who, in public situations, have such an alarming thing happen to them. And Jesus, I think, wanted to end the ordeal quickly before it became more public than it already was.

I think perhaps guarding the boy's privacy and his dignity somewhat. So when he saw the people who came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to him, you deaf and dumb spirit, I command you to come out of him and enter him no more. Now, as far as I know, I don't think there's any other place in the Bible where Jesus not only commanded the demon to go out, but also said, don't come back.

Don't enter him ever again. We know that in Matthew 12, Jesus said that when an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it wanders through waterless places, seeking rest, and finding none, it returns and having found its house, the former host, cleaned and set in order, but empty, it comes back and brings back seven demons worse than itself. I'm sure that that's a very familiar passage.

Most people, once they've read it, don't forget that's a striking passage. One of the few that Jesus actually gives any kind of teaching on demonology. And essentially, he gives it not in order to teach us about demons, but to say something about his generation, because he says in verse 45 of Matthew 12, after making that comment, he says, so shall it be also with this wicked generation.

That is, Jesus has come to that generation and cast the demon out, so to speak. But when he goes away, the demon is going to come back in force. And they did, as you can tell by the behavior of the Jews under siege, some 40 years later, they were clearly demons were running wild in the community.

Although Jesus had sort of brought them under control when he was present. He said, this generation is going to be like a demon possessed man who's had a demon driven out, but it comes back worse than before. And so he makes the statement about demons in order to make really a statement about his own generation.

But the statement he makes about demons is no doubt accurate and true, that demons can come back, and they can come back worse than before. And I've often thought when Jesus in Mark 9.25 told the demon to come out and enter him no more, that this may be a case where Jesus is excluding any opportunity for the demon to ever come back in the manner that demons sometimes do by his other teaching in Matthew 12. Sometimes demons come back.

But in this case, Jesus would make an exception. He was not going to allow that. He's going to strictly forbid the demon to ever come back.

And that's kind of how I've always understood this. But there is one other possible way of

understanding his, and enter him no more. It might be that Jesus affirms that this man was correct in saying the demon comes and goes.

It's been coming and going and it came into him even as he was approaching Jesus. But Jesus cast it out and said, okay, this is the last time you're going out. Don't come back.

It would be affirming that the demon had entered him on many occasions. Don't enter him anymore after this. It would just be a way of saying you're out.

It would not mean necessarily that nothing the boy could do in his behavior would necessarily allow a demon to come back in, but rather that Jesus was bringing an end to this cycle of the demon coming and going and coming and going and coming and going. Get out and don't come back. It would possibly, I mean, the way I've always understood it would be that the demon could never under any circumstances come back.

Although Jesus spoke in another place of circumstances where demons could. But when he says enter him no more, it might be a reference back to the fact that this demon was one that came and went on a regular basis. And so he's causing him to go, but not come back.

He's ending that cycle. Anyway, verse 26 says, and 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.

So this exorcism was accompanied by such violence on the part of the demon going out. And the father had said earlier, and he only goes out with great difficulty. Well, he went out with great difficulty this time too, but he went out for good, we have reason to believe.

The boy was so exhausted that he seemed to be dead. He apparently didn't have any obvious breathing or whatever at that moment. Maybe he even was dead.

If so, Jesus raised him from the dead. Though the Bible doesn't affirm that he was dead. It just says that everyone said he was.

He may have just been unconscious or just totally exhausted after such a fit. Judith? Okay. If it was dumb, how could it hear? Yeah.

Yeah. Well, I'm even, I thought of that at the time. In fact, I figured I'd make that point, but I didn't make it when I came to the right place to make it, did I? But I thank you for bringing that up.

I personally thought of that very thing, even when I said the demon itself might be deaf and mute. Jesus can speak to things that can't hear, and they still have to obey. He spoke to the wind and the waves, and they obeyed him.

And when he created the heavens and the earth, he spoke to the darkness and said, let

there be light. And there was light. Jesus' authority seems to go beyond even the ability of, well, let's put it this way.

The Syrophenician woman, she came to Jesus because her daughter was demon possessed, but her daughter was at home in bed. And this woman came out to meet Jesus, and Jesus basically said, okay, your daughter is going to be better now. And just that statement caused it to be, even though the demon, which was somewhere else in this girl, apparently wasn't present to hear Jesus make the remark.

But somehow the information was communicated to the demon, and the demon left. So I would say that the fact that Jesus spoke and commanded the demon to come out in this case wouldn't necessarily prove that the demon was not deaf, because demons have to obey him just like the wind and the waves and other even inanimate things that cannot hear have to obey him. Satan, when he said to Jesus in the wilderness, if you're the son of God, why don't you command these stones to become bread? Well, Jesus didn't do it, but we presume that he could have, which is why it was a temptation.

He could have spoken to the stones, and they would have turned into bread. Well, neither stones nor bread can hear, but they would have obeyed him, I think, because his word carries such authority. You could be right, and I would not wish to say as if there's no alternative possibilities that the demons were dumb and deaf and couldn't hear, but it's, as I say, a theory of mine that, I mean, it is said that it was a deaf and dumb spirit.

It could mean that that's simply the symptoms that the demons produced in the person who was possessed by the spirit, though the wording kind of sounds like the spirit itself was thus. It's an open question, really. I don't have much emotional stake in the question.

I find it interesting, yeah, because they even speak of the demon as he rather than it. I think I, you know, demons are so strange and mysterious. I guess I'm more inclined to speak of a demon as it, you know, not as a being that has gender, but throughout this, the demon is spoken of as a he.

I, myself. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, there's a real personal confrontation between the Son of God and a demonic spirit as two persons confronting each other as, you know, rivals or challengers of each other.

Now, even though when the demon came out, it appeared that the boy was dead, we're not told that the boy was and he may not have been, but it says in verse 27, Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up and he arose. It doesn't say so here, but it says in Luke 9 42, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child and gave him back to his father. There's no reference to him giving him back to his father here.

I would point out, though, this is another case where the casting out of demon is referred

to as a healing, because that's the word that is used in Luke 9 42. Jesus rebuked the demon and healed the child. And the reason I bring that up is because of that scripture, somewhat ambiguous scripture in Acts 10 38, where Peter says that Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.

The question is, what does oppressed by the devil refer to there? Is it referring to sickness, ordinary sickness? Because it says healed them. And therefore, the suggestion would be that all the sick people that Jesus healed, even the ones where demons were not involved, that all the sick people were oppressed by the devil. And that would suggest the notion that sickness is itself an oppression from the devil.

But I suggested the other night that those who are oppressed by the devil might be those who had demonic problems. And Peter might be referring to them. Notwithstanding the fact that Peter said he healed those who were oppressed by the devil, the word healing can be applied to deliverance.

And it was in this case. Another instance I gave was in Matthew 12 22. Matthew 12 22, the one who had, I think it was a blind and a deaf spirit.

It says Jesus healed him, cast out the demon and healed him. So I guess what I just point out to you is that both the healing of organic sicknesses, as well as those that were caused by demons and where the real, what really happened was an exorcism that both are referred to as healing in the Bible. Now, verse 28.

And when he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast him out? Now his answer here in Mark is not as lengthy, nor as, as, as good as we could hope. But some of the gospels, the other gospels give us more information here. It simply says, so he said to them, this kind can only come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

Well, one problem here is that the word and fasting is not found in other manuscripts other than the Texas receptus that does not make them inauthentic. If the Texas receptus is the best trans is the best manuscript, then that's fine. Then he did say and fasting.

If however, the Alexandrian texts is to be preferred. And many, many people believe that it is, I don't, but some people think so. Then, then Jesus did not mention fasting there, or at least Mark doesn't mention it.

However, in Luke chapter nine, I think this is a, no, not Luke nine, excuse me, Matthew's version. It's Matthew's version that gives us more Matthew 17. There's more to the answer than that.

In Matthew 17, 19, when then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, why could we not cast him out? So Jesus said to them, because of your unbelief, the Alexandrian

text is your little faith. For surely I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you'll be able to say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you. Now he had earlier told the father, nothing is impossible to him who believes.

And now he says to the disciples, that was your problem. You didn't have faith and nothing would be impossible to those who do. Verse 21 says, however, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

Verse 21 in its entirety is omitted from the Alexandrian text. Now those who hold that the Alexandrian text is the preferable text would just suggest that some scribe added verse 21 here based upon Mark's gospel. They assume Mark was the And since Mark refers to Jesus saying this kind does not go out but by prayer and some manuscripts say in fasting, they would say that someone added that to Matthew's gospel because it's not found in the Alexandrian text of Matthew, verse 21.

That is not necessarily the best explanation though. It's possible that the Alexandrian text is the corrupted text and that they've left it out for some reason, either accidentally or positively. But I will say this, most of us are familiar with this statement, this kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting, especially in relation to why demons sometimes don't go out.

It's been numberless times that I've been in conversation with people on the subject of demonology and they've mentioned that prayer and fasting is necessary in some cases. Well, I wish it were not the case but that rests on a disputed text because both Matthew and Mark which mention fasting, they only do so in the textus receptus. If the Alexandrian text is preferable then there's no mention of fasting in either place.

Both passages leave out fasting in the Alexandrian text. I've made my sympathies known. I don't approve or prefer the Alexandrian text but most scholars do and therefore it's something to be considered.

We don't know for sure whether it was one of the original statements of Jesus or whether that was added by a scribe as most scholars would say. Most scholars can't be wrong though. Yes, Judy? Was Jesus praying and fasting up there? We have no reason to believe they took food up there.

We don't know they didn't but he was praying. Luke tells us he was praying up there in Luke's account of the transfiguration. As he prayed, he was transfigured or transformed.

As far as fasting, I think we could probably just deduce that he was fasting by the fact that he may not have taken any food up there. There's no record of them having a meal and therefore Jesus, we could probably suggest, had been in prayer and fasting which might have been why he was successful and may not. That still would not answer the

question as to whether his statement about prayer and fasting was part of the original text.

I'm inclined to accept it of course because of my own thoughts about the text but there'd be many preachers and Christians who would not accept it. The reason I bring these points up is because many times we'll quote a text that's genuine as far as we're concerned but it won't convince other Christians because it's not in their Bible. You won't find it in their Bible.

In fact, I'm not sure who has the NASB here? Is it there? What do they say there? Do you have Matthew 17 21 there? Do they omit 21 and then have a footnote or something? They put it there in brackets and have maybe a note that says some manuscripts omit this. Oh, so they leave fasting out of the text in Mark but they put mention in a note. Okay.

Yeah, different translators handle it different ways but I guess what I want you to be acquainted with is we are using a Bible here that has a lot of phrases and stuff that aren't in some of the other Bibles. I believe all those phrases are legitimate but you should be aware that some people you talk to won't have those things in their Bibles and I want you to know why because their manuscripts are different that they're working from. Now, I guess the question could be raised why would that affect whether a demon comes out or not? Prayer and fasting.

After all, Jesus didn't pray for the demon to come out nor did anyone in the Bible ever pray for a demon to come out. Jesus simply cast demons out by telling them to come out. He didn't pray to God about it.

He just told the demons to come out and so did the apostles in the book of Acts. We never read of them praying for the demons to come out. We read of them casting demons out.

So why would prayer and fasting figure into this picture? Well, I'd like to suggest to you that it does and I think it's legitimate. Jesus didn't say that the demons come out while you are fasting and praying necessarily because we don't read of him praying while he was casting the demon out but but nonetheless prayer and fasting is something that does build up a person's own spiritual closeness to God and their faith and so forth which are important factors when you're dealing with demons. Although every Christian possesses the name of Jesus and therefore the right, I think, to cast demons out, I don't think all Christians are walking in the right kind of faith or the right kind of authority at all times to do that.

I mean, Jesus' disciples for example. I mean, the nine who were unable to cast the demons out, it's not that it was too early and Pentecost hadn't come yet or whatever because they had been casting out demons earlier on their mission that Jesus sent them

out. Jesus, when they said, why couldn't we cast it out? He didn't say, well, because it's not time yet.

You know, wait till the day of Pentecost and then you'll be able to do these kind of things. He said no. He indicated that they could have done it had their faith been adequate and possible depending on the manuscript if they've been more in prayer and fasting.

And I think that this suggests that victory over Satan, and in the particular case we're talking about casting a demon out, but I think we could extend it to any problems with demons, any authority that we seek to exercise over demons, even if it's personal problems with the devil. Any spiritual warfare that we're engaged in is going to be conducted through faith, through prayer, through fasting, and deficiencies in these areas are going to limit the results. It's not simply that there's magic in the name of Jesus, and if we just utter the name of Jesus like a magic formula, somehow the demons are going to obey.

There's more involved what is our faith level in Jesus' authority. Remember the sons of Sceva in Acts 19, they used the name of Jesus. They said, we command you to a demon, we command you in the name of this Jesus whom Paul preaches to come out.

But these men had no personal faith in Jesus. They didn't know Jesus. Paul knew Jesus, and the demons said, well, we know Jesus, we know Paul, but we don't know you.

But if these men had known and believed in Jesus, there's a good chance that they would have been more successful. Just using the word Jesus doesn't always get magical results with demons, and just praying prayers of deliverance or commanding demons or doing spiritual warfare things are no guarantee that there'll be results if there's not faith, and if a person is not a person of prayer and fasting. Now, we've talked about fasting here before, and what I said at the time is, I don't know that Jesus ever encouraged the disciples or himself practiced routine fasts or weekly fasts.

He may have, but if he did, it's not recorded in scripture. In this particular case, for example, we're not told specifically that he'd gone up the mountain to fast, but assuming he hadn't taken any food up, he just incidentally fasted. I mean, that's just the point.

What I said at the time is that most Christian fasting, I think, at least if it resembles the model that I kind of read there of Jesus and Paul and others, Jesus sometimes ministered for three days, and he didn't stop to take meals or sleep, not because he decided to fast, but because what he was doing precluded his eating. Likewise, being up on the Mount of Transfiguration, he might not have gone up to think, it's my fast day, so I'm going to go up on the mountain to fast, but he ended up fasting because there wasn't food there, and therefore, fasting becomes something that's kind of incidental to the fact that you have food to eat that others know not of, that your meat is to do the will of the Father

and finish his work, and that often keeps you busy enough that meals are not available or that you can't take time for them, and therefore, you are fasting, whether you've determined to fast or not. You're fasting because you're doing the will of God, and that sometimes takes the place of eating.

Yeah. Maybe, although I must say I've always been kind of indisposed toward that idea of spending all night casting demons out. I mean, Jesus cast out demons with the word.

The apostles seemed to do so also. It seems like they didn't have to struggle with demons for a long time, but there can be no doubt their faith was better than ours sometimes, and they did walk probably in a fair amount of authority greater than we commonly do. In that particular case I mentioned, I'm still not sure if the woman was demon-possessed.

I mean, the husband testified to us that she had done things that convinced him, but we never saw anything that convinced us, so we're sort of ambivalent about that situation, and maybe that's why it didn't come out. Maybe there wasn't one there to come out, or maybe it was our very ambivalence that caused it not to. I would hope... I see what I think Jesus is saying is that he was the kind of person that he was always involved in prayer, and fasting was a fairly regular thing, not because he scheduled it, but just because his food was to do the will of his Father and to finish his work, and if that meant he couldn't take time out to eat, so be it.

I mean, he ended up fasting inadvertently or unplanned, I imagine, many times. Paul did too. As he said in 1 Corinthians, he was in fastings often, watchings often, in a context that probably means involuntarily at times.

He was places where there just wasn't food. But what he would be saying about this kind goes out by prayer and fasting and not without it, possibly would mean that people who are people of prayer, people whose lives are characterized by prayer and fasting, like Jesus, they are more likely to have the kind of faith and walk in the kind of authority that gets the results that the disciples at the bottom of the mountain were not able to get, but Jesus could, because he was a man of prayer and fasting, and they perhaps were not. It doesn't necessarily mean a person had to be fasting at the moment they're trying to cast the demon out, though that might help too.

I remember one preacher said that he was trying to cast a demon out of someone, the demons started challenging him, saying, you can't cast me out, you're not fasting, and I'm the kind that only goes out by prayer and fasting. And at first this preacher said, oh, you know, it stunned him, you know, I kind of heard his, he thought, well, maybe, maybe that's right, I'm not fasting, and maybe I can't cast him out. And then he said, wait a minute, I'm not casting you out, Jesus is casting you out, and he fasted, and he's the one who's casting you out, not me, so it doesn't matter that I haven't fasted.

And he said the demon went out then. So demons try to get your eyes off the Lord and onto you, it seems like. Anyway, as a postscript to this, in Mark chapter 9, we're done here, but we just need to point out in verses 30 through 32, Jesus, again, a second time, told his disciples he was going to die.

It says, then, verse 30, then they departed from there to pass through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know it, for he taught his disciples and said to them, the Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise the third day. That's the second time he told them that. He told them that at Caesarea Philippi also, just before the Mount of Transfiguration.

But they did not understand this saying, and they were afraid to ask him. So he's told them this twice, but they still don't understand what he's talking about, and they're afraid to ask. Now, I wonder if that's because he was intimidating.

You'd think that Jesus would be a nice enough guy that people wouldn't be afraid to ask him questions. But maybe just because he'd recently said, how long must I bear with you, they could tell he's getting a little bit frustrated with them, and maybe they didn't want to get his rebuke for not understanding. No doubt he would certainly say to them, are you still without understanding? That's the kind of question that you do.

You don't feel comfortable with Jesus asking you, so maybe to avoid that, they just lived with their ignorance, which is a shame, because it left them all together unprepared for what did happen, even though he's trying to prepare them for it. Which I guess points out that if we don't understand something, we should ask Jesus and not be afraid to ask him, because it certainly was to their disadvantage that they didn't understand what he was talking about when he said he was going to die and rise three days later. They could have known if they'd asked.

Okay, well, that's about all we have time for today, so we'll quit there.