

# Evaluating The Signs Of The Times

by Tim Conway

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*The sermon titled 'The Signs of the Times' emphasizes the need for discontentment in the church to address the spiritual condition of the nation and the church. Drawing from the account of the disciples' inability to cast out a demon in Matthew 17, the sermon highlights the importance of prayer and fasting to overcome spiritual obstacles and move demonic mountains. It challenges believers to recognize the signs of the times, engage in fervent prayer and fasting, and seek the power of God to combat the spiritual darkness and apathy prevalent in society.*

**Duration:** 1:13:16

**Scripture:** Matthew 17:14, Mark 9:29, Ephesians 6:12, James 5:16, Daniel 10:12, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 139:23, Isaiah 58:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:6

**Topics:** "Spiritual Awakening", "Power of Prayer and Fasting"

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## Description

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, please open up to Matthew chapter 17. Matthew chapter 17. The title of my sermon is The Signs of the Times.

And no, I'm not preaching specifically from Matthew chapter 24. I'm going to shoot straight with you right up here at the beginning that what I want to talk to you about right now is for the discontent. We heard when Jeff preached this morning about just being satisfied.

Unquestionably, we are to be satisfied in the way of salvation and what God has provided for us. But I want to talk to you about that place where I believe that we should not be satisfied. I hope that we have some people here that are discontent when you look at the shape of this nation.

Discontent when you think about the overall condition of the church in this country. And I want to bring you to Matthew 17 because there's an account here that even ever since we first decided that we were going

to have this conference, I couldn't get away from this passage and the parallel passage over in Mark chapter 9. But Matthew 17 verse 14. This is the account of the healing of the boy with the demon.

And I'm going to read just a little bit from Mark's account after I read you Matthew's. Now don't go over to Mark. Just stay right here.

Camp right in Matthew 17. And just hear me when I read from Mark. The first 14.

You know the scene. Our Lord and three of the inner circle, they come down off this mount of transfiguration. They see a crowd.

Mark tells us that the other disciples were arguing with the scribes. And so when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and kneeling before him said, Lord have mercy on my son for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire and often into the water.

And I brought him to your disciples and they could not heal him. And Jesus answered, oh faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him.

And the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, because of your little faith. This is very interesting.

Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, which that sounds like little faith. I mean, it's almost like, well, they have little faith, but then he says that's what it takes.

We'll look at that a little more. If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you. Now, it's interesting when you get the parallel account from Mark.

Now think with me here. Matthew says, why could we not cast it out? Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you.

Mark says, when he entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. And I'm going to put fasting in there. Prayer and fasting.

I was just not too long ago, too many months ago, I was at a conference for revival and reformation and Stuart Aliot was one of the preachers there. And he and I began to have a discussion and this text came up in our discussion and I included fasting. And he said, do you know that Papyrus 45, I don't think he used that explicit expression right there, but he said, are you aware that the oldest manuscripts actually contain it? I said, no, I was not aware of that.

So I looked it up. You know, they have discovered the four gospels a hundred years older than anything else that they've had. And this is there, the prayer and fasting.

Of course, it's in the majority of texts and it's the oldest text. And I don't want to leave it out. Prayer and fasting.

So we're going to come back to that in a second. But let's just survey the account. Let's just think of some of the things that probably would jump out at you very obviously just from a quick survey.

But I want us to take specific notice, specifically concerning the disciples here. First thing, I want us to think about the disciples' task. Disciples.

The disciples are made of the same stuff you and I are. They're made of flesh and blood. And what was their task? Well, in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus specifically told them, he sent them out, proclaim the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. One of the things that Jesus told these disciples to do was cast out demons. That's in the imperative.

He'd do this. And you remember when the 70 or 72, whatever your Bible says, you remember how they responded. Then Jesus said to them, behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over the power of the enemy.

And so these guys, all the way back from Matthew 10, they've been commanded to do this. Cast out. Isn't this interesting? Undoubtedly, they went forth and they began to cast out these demons and demons.

You know what? The 72, they came back and they were all excited. These demonic spirits, they give way before us. I mean, it happened.

And you can imagine how these guys might be bewildered when Jesus told them to do it. And then they went out and they did it. But then this day comes when all of a sudden they weren't able to do it.

I mean, what happened? It seems that their authority was all of a sudden gone. And you can imagine why they were asking, Lord, why couldn't we do it? I mean, you commanded us to do it. It's worked every day before now.

Next, I want you to notice this. Notice the opponent, the disciple's opponent. Jesus calls him the enemy.

You will have power over, or you will over all the power of the enemy. The enemy. Think about this.

What were they up against? And brethren, I'm dealing with all of this because I want us to think about what we're up against. What were they up against? In Mark's account, it says he has a spirit. This is the father talking.

He has a spirit that makes him mute. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down. He foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid.

It has often cast him into fire and into water to destroy him. You know what the disciples, you have to think about this. You think about when you're approaching a boy like this, you're approaching a boy who has some angelic being that is taken up host there.

Cruel. Cast him into the fire, cast him into the water. This is a wicked spirit that is tormenting this boy.

Can you imagine if you're the mother or the father, the brother or sister, and this is going on in your household? This is traumatic. Seizures, mute, fire, water. And you know what Jesus says? This kind can't be driven out but by prayer and fasting.

And you want to catch that. This kind. What does that mean? They're dealing with a kind that is so diabolical and deeply entrenched here that they had power to expel the demons.

And they knew it. But now they're baffled by this. Why could we not? Their experience was that they could.

Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. But now an especially hideous kind of demon is resisting the people of God. Now I want us to think for a second about the disciples' failure.

You know what? There's only one reason Jesus is being asked to heal this boy when he comes down off the Mount of Transfiguration. And it's precisely because his disciples couldn't do it. Lord, help us.

What did the guy say? What did the father say? I brought my son to your disciples and they could not. They could not. I wonder do we talk like that? Do we talk that way? Brethren, I'll tell you this.

As reformed people, we have such an idea about the providence of God that we can easily blame everything on God. They could not. Are we in a place where we cannot? I mean, when I look around at the world, this is the kind of question.

When I'm talking about the signs of the times, I'm wanting us to think, think, think, think. What is the church up against? What are we doing? What was the Lord's response? I brought my son to your disciples. They couldn't do this.

And Jesus says, faithless, perverse, faithless, twisted generation. Ouch. And you know, we can hear that and we can distance ourselves from it.

But are we just as perverse? Are we just as twisted? Do we not even feel comfortable going there and asking that kind of question? I want to ask you this. When he said, oh, faithless and twisted generation, let me just ask you, who is he talking to? I would just ask more questions. Who couldn't cast the demon out? Who was it that was lacking faith to bring this to pass? Who was it that the father said was impotent? That's what we have to ask.

And you know what Jesus says, how long am I to bear with this? There is something about unbelief here that Jesus, Jesus is not excusing this failure. This is no minor issue to him. He is disgusted.

This is abhorrent to him. And we need to realize, we need to recognize brethren, that the Lord, do you ever think about the Lord when he examined the seven churches at Asia Minor, he was able to look at them and say, well, this church, this church is in this condition and I know their works and this is how I would define them. This is how I would spell out their condition.

Do you ever ask how God would define us? How Christ, if he were to come among us and actually write a little epistle to each of us as he did to those seven churches, what would he say? What would he say collectively about us? What I'm asking is this, when we look around, how much are we impacting the world? You see, these guys lack potency. The reality is that whatever they had, they didn't help the situation. Whatever kind of faith you might say they had to follow Christ, or even the faith that they had to try to cast the demon out, the reality is, what was the end product? The end product was something that Jesus was not happy with.

We want to think about this. Now, think with me here. Think about the disciples' potential, because I think this is, this jumps out at me.

God's people can be faithless, perverse, twisted, and see, those are Jesus' words. Those are strong words. And I just don't think there's any way you can blanket or shield the disciples from those words.

You can't say, well, he's talking about the scribes. The scribes were not the ones who were inept in failing on this day. And so, here's the thing.

Jesus, when they say, why couldn't we do it, admitting that they couldn't, Jesus obviously is put off by, how long am I going to bear with this? And when they said, why couldn't we do it? You know what? He does not say, well, you guys are just doomed to a forever position of being impotent. You know what he says? He says, you guys actually have the potential to move mountains. That's what he says to them.

You guys actually have the potential to be in the place where nothing is impossible with you. Now, a lot of times we feel uncomfortable with this kind of language. Why? It just seems too grand, too big, too over the top.

But I'll tell you this, if you even start thinking about the promises that have been given us in Scripture concerning prayer, like, whoever asks will receive, whatever you ask in my name, I will do it. If he didn't spare his own son, will he not also through him give us all things? You just have these promises. It's like we can come across these kinds of promises, moving mountains and nothing will be impossible to you, and we just don't even believe it.

Our unbelief kicks in just like their unbelief kicked in, left the day powerless, left the day defeated, left the day with Jesus having this attitude that there was such a perversity among them that he was wondering how long he would actually bear with them. And this failure, this failure, what I want you to feel is the potential, even though they had failure here, what the Lord is doing is he's saying, you know what, you guys actually have the potential to be in a position where nothing's impossible with you. And the question that I would ask is this, brethren, the question of the hour is, we're just, we have to be honest.

Now, listen, if you're sitting out there today and you're just saying, well, look, I'm content with the way things are, I'm content with the way my church is, I'm content with the way the United Kingdom is, and so I'm good. Well, you can tune me out. You can tune me out right now.

But I don't think the church here is so healthy. I don't think the baptistries are full. I don't think you find a whole bunch of new converts inhabiting your churches.

That's not what I see here. I don't think, if you're honest, there's a whole lot of churches in this country with full prayer meetings. I'm just trying to keep my eyes open.

I'm not wanting to make an unrighteous judgment here. I'm just asking all of us, I want us to be honest with this passage. Let me ask you this, does it describe us? Would anybody look at our churches and say nothing's impossible for them? Are we the kind of, does anybody feel like I go to a church that is a mountain moving church and nothing's impossible? Does your experience bear that out? That's my question.

I mean, that's what I ask myself. And when I come and I see this kind of thing, does the language actually accurately describe me? And if we conclude, well, not so much. Here's, I have to come face to face with these two.

I love reading the Lord Jesus because He makes us feel uncomfortable. I like to feel uncomfortable. I want the fullness of what God has for us in this day and in this generation.

And I just ask this, okay, if we are not in the place where we are mountain moving people of God, mountain moving churches, where nothing is impossible, categorically by default, where does that put us? If you see in this account, two categories, you have one mountain moving. What's the other one? One is nothing is impossible. What's the other one? Faithless.

I don't find a middle ground. It's like, if we don't have the faith, then there is something repulsive about that to the Lord. Now, here's the thing.

I've called this message the signs of the time. The disciples asked the question, why couldn't we do this? Are any of us, I just wonder, are you asking the question, why are we not impacting this nation more than we are? Why? Why when we pray, why when we evangelize, we heard about power. Why is it that it seems like there's a lack of power? Why does it seem like the spirit is removed? Why does it seem that way? I mean, I think we need to honestly ask these kinds of questions.

The disciples were asking that, Lord, why couldn't we cast it out? Why couldn't they? And you see their question comes from the fact that they didn't recognize the signs of the time. They didn't recognize what was really happening. But Jesus is going to put some light on it.

Hey, you guys are dealing with a kind of demon here that isn't just your average kind. And you guys have basically missed the road to making this happen. You know what Jesus never says in this account? Well, there's lots of things he never says, but big things that he never says.

He never says this will always be impossible. It's impossible no matter what happens, no matter what course you take. He didn't go say, study John Owen a little more.

And I was like, I have no problem with the Puritans at all. But you know, there's a lot of things that we like to say that we need to give our attention to and give our time to. It's almost like, well, if we pursue this intellectualism, or if we pursue certain teaching, or if we get this proper preacher, or if we go down this path, a lot of times our eyes are on, you know, if we tweak, if we tweak this thing, if we gain some more knowledge, if we have the right doctrine, if it... Jesus doesn't even go there.

He says intrinsically, you guys have a faith issue. And this isn't necessarily just a doctrinal issue. There's faith here.

What are the signs of the time? Now Jesus says, you know, you know this, when it's evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. Red in the, when I, where I grew up in Michigan, red in the morning, sailors take warning. Red in the night, sailors delight.

Well, it's the same thing here. He says when it's evening, you say it'll be fair weather for the sky is red. In the morning, it will be stormy today for the sky is red and threatening.

You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. Brethren, look, I just, I want to be honest about the signs of the time. I want to be honest about what we see when we look around.

I want us to be honest. Are we getting the gospel effectively into prisons, into college campuses, into our city centers and our rural areas? Are we turning the world upside down like some who went before us have? And see, if we just simply say, well, God, I mean, we're good, good reformed people. God's sovereign.

I want you to notice something. Jesus never relegated this to the sovereignty of God. He put it square on the shoulders of the failure of these men.

And if we're going to get to the place where we're going to actually seek to make some advances, don't we have to be honest with what the situation actually is? I mean, we need to recognize the signs of the times. He says you can interpret the appearance of the sky. You can't interpret the signs of the times.

You know what? His logic is just one of common sense. That's all it is. If someone can look at the sky and read the signs there, why can't they use their faculties and recognize what's happening all around us spiritually? You know what I found over here? I found in Texas, when you see a big, dark cloud, usually it doesn't mean rain.

Over here, I've learned you see a cloud in the sky, you better hike it if you don't want to get wet. Here, the people just seem to be okay getting wet. In Texas, they scatter.

If the south wind's blowing, it's going to be hot in Texas. It's been over 40 for like six weeks straight. We know signs of the weather.

We can do it. And you know when we read things like this, we always want to think that we understand. We see things clearly.

It's other people that can't see things clearly. We oftentimes make assumptions like that. But we're surrounded.

Brethren, we are surrounded by the signs of the times. Things are happening. You look at the news.

You look at the internet. Things are happening all around us. And what Jesus is saying is just open your eyes and see and behold what time it is.

Use your common sense properly. That's what he's saying. Interpret the signs of the times.

Remember those guys that gathered to David, the sons of Issachar? What does it say about them? It specifically says this, of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. It specifically talks about these guys at a time when everybody was trying to figure out, do we make David king right now or don't? And here's these sons of Issachar and they come along and they know what time it is. They can look around and they can discern what Israel ought to do.

The disciples were disconnected. They didn't know what Israel ought to do. What should we do? Should we do anything? I mean, when we look around and we see the churches, many of the church buildings, we drove here today.

Big, grand, old church building and there's just, there's stuff growing around it. The thing is obviously empty. It's abandoned.

I mean, that's basically a picture in this country of a classic old church building that who knows what doctrine was ever taught in it. But I'd like to think at one time there was truth there and people came out of those neighborhoods. But what is it now? It's a shell of what it used to be.

The disciples in this account were disconnected with how things really were. They didn't realize. They were confused.

They just didn't get it. Lord, we don't know why we couldn't do this. What's wrong? They couldn't see what the problem was.

Do we know what Israel ought to do? That's my question to you. Do we know? If there's a need of the hour, it's men who understand the times, know the way forward. Can we discern the sky? But yet not this time.

Oh, folks, I mean, think with me. Your homeschooling rights, they're going to be challenged. What are you going to do? What sign of the time is that? They're building buffer zones around the abortion clinics so you can't even get close enough for your voices to be heard.

What they're doing in the public schools, we've got a family going to court. Christian Concern, the city council in this city, they don't want foster parents to just allow these gender differences and homosexuality. You've got to promote it if you're going to foster in their system.

Are we looking at the signs of the times? The power. We hear about the power of God unto salvation. We heard about it in the first hour.

Does anybody look up and say, where is the power? We hear the message. We hear that it is the power. We can read it in our Bibles.

But where is it? Where are whole families like in the Bible? Where are they being converted? Brethren, we look around. One of the things that surprised me when I came to this country, there's a universal tendency in this country to despise marriage. 20% of marriage age individuals actually get married in this country.

I mean, do you recognize what's happening? The aborting of children, just dismember them in the mother's womb. You look around, look at the weather. Spiritually speaking, clouds of apathy.

I told some of the brothers at one point, I was dismayed. 50% of the church showing up for the prayer meeting. They said, brother, it's not uncommon to have five show up.

What sign of the time is that? We go down to the city center. God? People don't even know about the scriptures. There's an ignorance and an illiteracy in this country concerning even what the truth is.

Think about what's being propagated in your government. Think about what is happening in parliament. The leadership in this country.

Just look, would you not agree this nation is possessed by diabolical spirits that are throwing this country into the fire and into the water? And what do we do? Are we impotent like those guys? Are we praying and seeing these spirits cast out? Are we seeing them relinquish their grip? Is that what's happening? Brother, you know what? We look around. What do you see? What do you see when you look at the media? What do you see when you look at TV or look at the movies? There is a degenerative, there are forces at work here and it goes beyond the human folks. We're dealing with something.

There's a greed. There's dishonesty, a sexual perversion. We're still at a place in the U.S. You do not see homosexuals kissing each other on commercials.

My wife and I went up to Dales. We stayed up there in the Lake District. We were in a hotel.

We turned on the TV. We don't watch that at home. We turned it on.

There's two men. I'm not saying the U.S. isn't close behind, but do we really recognize the signs of the time? The black clouds that hover over this country are a sign. Are they not? And I just ask this.

I would say, why are we powerless? But maybe the better question is, do you think we are? Is there a powerlessness among the churches? Now some might say, well, it's that reform movement. Well, are the Pentecostals doing a whole lot better? Is the Anglican Church doing a whole? I mean, where is God at work? Where is something happening? Which way are the sons of Issachar to turn? I mean, do we know what Israel ought to do? What's our duty? People of God, I just pray that we would discern the times and learn to act our parts as men and women of God, ordained to defend the truth and take on the devil. Did our Lord Jesus Christ not say that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church? We need to take that.

That's what He said. They shall not. And so I just ask this.

What is our duty in the present crisis? Because you know what? Jesus didn't tell those guys, well, there's nothing you could do. You just basically have to wait for revival to come. He didn't tell those guys that.

He told them that there was in fact a duty that they could do. But I just say, isn't it in the first place just a place that we recognize what the situation actually is? I mean, you know God coordinated my coming here to this country right when the COVID crisis came. You know what COVID revealed? Especially in the Reformed churches.

Do you know what it revealed? There is a lack of faith. Many of the churches were gripped by fear. You know what? I think we can't help but say there is a crisis of faith among the Reformed churches.

And listen, I'm not talking about an ability to comprehend scriptural doctrine. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about people that have a real, confident, experiential persuasion of the power of God, who are ready and willing to cling to God and go out and be dangerous in this world and seek to turn the world upside down.

It's very difficult to have a church that's dangerous and reaching into prisons and reaching into far corners of this world and making disciples of the nations when you can hardly get people into the churches because they are scared to death to shake hands with a brother or sister in Christ. Now, I know that that's largely gone away. But brethren, is that not a sign of the times? Whence the weakness? As I've said repeatedly, so many of my heroes that come from over here, we need men like William Carey that are going to just rise up again and say, we've got to attempt great things for God.

Listen to what Spurgeon said, do and dare for God, my brethren, be bold for Him. Brethren, is it not clear to every observer who looks around at the signs of the times right now, religious apathy abounds. The church has very much been lulled to sleep.

You can take great hope if the numbers are small, but there's a fervency and a fire. But no matter what the size is, when you get a feeling, there's a sleep. Just sleep, sleep.

And you know what? You can argue with me if you like. Well, I don't think that's the way the church is. You know what? I halfway want you to.

We need some Christians with fight in them. Brethren, we need to recognize, listen, is the Spirit of God blowing upon your land as He has in days past? We can weep. You know what? You can find glory when you read Whitefield, when you read Wesley, when you read about what happened in Spurgeon's day, when you read what happened in Simeon's day, when we read about men who have been raised up in this country and launched forth from its shores, we can rejoice in that.

But you know, we can also weep over that. Because one of the sad signs of the time in the sons of Issachar are going to recognize is where is the Spirit of God? Where is the Spirit of God empowering this gospel that we have? Where is this? Where is it happening? Is there not a withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the land? Where's the Spirit of God at this time? Where are the converts that are flying to Christ? Where's the harvest? Where's the revival? Listen, when it seems the Spirit is quenched, maybe that's the case. Maybe the Spirit's grieved.

Brethren, have we done anything to grieve the Spirit? Have we become too worldly? Is there any reason why the Spirit would not be working that has to do with us? If you say, I don't want to go there, well then, you're afraid to go where Jesus went. Because Jesus said, you know what, guys? The problem actually rests with you. It's not with my Father.

It's not with me. It's not with the Spirit. It's not with God's providence.

It doesn't have to do with God's sovereignty. That's not where he goes. Have Christian men become worldly? You know what Scripture says? He didn't do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

And all I'm asking is for us to be honest. Just honest. Is it true? I mean, is it possible that we become faithless and perverse? Though we can tout our doctrine, is there a reality? I'm just asking.

Because here's the thing. Jesus connects impotence with faithlessness and perverseness. And see, if we want to say no to the later, then show me the power.

Show me the people turning the world upside down. Do you not agree? I'm just trying to, I'm wanting to be honest with the passage. Mountains.

Does anybody else see some mountains around us that need to be moved? I find we're confronted by mountains. I can't budge with my full energy. I can't move them.

They're mountains. Do you have a lost child? Do you have a lost grandchild? That's a mountain. The government.

The whole direction and momentum of this country. These are mountains. What are these mountains? Well, isn't this interesting? You guys couldn't pass this kind out.

But if you had faith, you would be able to say to this mountain, move over here. And nothing would be impossible. Let's read that in context.

What are these mountains? Brethren, you recognize who we wrestle against. We're dealing with demonic mountains. We're dealing with mountains of great, substantial, satanic bulwark.

And they don't move easily. The mountains that Jesus says a believing church can move is said in a direct response to casting out a demon of a kind that is especially entrenched, especially strong, especially diabolical. Have you considered the mountain ranges? I mean, look around.

Remember the apostles' words. Oh, brethren, hear me. Don't turn to this, but just listen.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. When you think of those babies being slaughtered in the womb, when you think about your rights of homeschooling being taken away, when you think about people hearing the gospel and they just walk away unmoved, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Just listen, listen.

But against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. You see, when we see darkness around us, we see darkness in the government. We see darkness in the media.

We see darkness on YouTube. We see darkness on the television. As we see darkness in the public school systems, we look around and there is a general God forgetfulness.

They don't honor him as God. They don't give him thanks. They don't recognize him.

They don't recognize that he is the creator. Evolution carries the day, science so-called. Just look, what you need to recognize is what we're up against.

We're not up against simply flesh and blood. Do you recognize that if the blinders could be taken off and we could see into the spiritual realm what we would see? There, Jesus said, this kind. See that boy over there? You see him being thrown this way and thrown towards that fire and can't speak and he's gnashing and he's foaming.

You see that? That's the external. That's what's visible to us. But what's behind that? There is a kind that is entrenched there.

And Jesus doesn't say you're helpless against that kind. He just says you're not going about this the right way. That's what this came down to.

There's a kind, folks. There is a kind of darkness that the church is not able to budge. Why can't we cast it out? The reality of Paul's statement, just think with me.

If the reality of Paul's statement about this rank and file of these demonic cosmic powers, if we really grasp this, it's going to change our whole methodology. It's going to change our whole approach. It's going to change our whole strategy.

What ought it to be? Is it just simply, well, we're going to use the power of the flesh. We're going to go over here. We're going to, we're going to, how do we fight this? Because we don't, we're not wrestling on this flesh and blood stage.

I mean, have you ever just stopped to consider the magnitude of what is being said? We have cosmic powers, cosmic powers over this present darkness. Oh, don't be deceived. There is a darkness.

It's the opposite of light. Light is what we get from scripture. Light is what Christ is.

Light is what the children of God, there is a darkness and it's cosmic, cosmic. Maybe one thing, you know, Jesus, this is, this is inspired language. It didn't just say earthly powers, cosmic.

It's almost like, what? Do you not know? We're the things that are not, we're not very mighty. We're not very wealthy. We're not very wise.

And we're being called to fight angels, cosmic powers, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Have you, do you ever just stop and think? You see, you drive up and down the roads, you don't see it. You drive up and down the roads.

What's happening inside all those houses? What's happening in the, in the universities, the institutions of this country? What's happening? And you know what the fear is? The fear is that many have fallen asleep. Just like the disciples in the garden. Remember, they fell asleep.

There's great spiritual battles taking place. Christ is there and sweating great drops of blood as it were. And this whole battle is going on in this wrestling for the sake of our very souls.

And there's the disciples over there and they're, they're, they're asleep. The battle rages. But you know what? We fall into this state where we're asleep.

It's like we're living in this dream. Someone says, wake up, watch, there's war. What? There's war? We hardly know.

We're under attack. What? We look around. What do you mean we're under attack? I'm going to go home.

My refrigerator is full. I'm going to, I've got, I've got my computer. I'm going to be able to sit down there and it'd be, it's sending my, my emails to people.

I mean, what are you talking about? We're under attack. War. I mean, we're still half asleep.

Sometimes we hardly know whether we're in the dream, whether we're on the battlefield, which one is more real. You go over to the book of Revelation and what do you find? You find that there's this war. This war happened in heaven.

You got the devil over here and you've got Michael, the archangel and back and forth they go. And what happens? This, this devil, this dragon is thrown down and it says Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. You recognize that when you walk up and down these streets, all these people out there, they're deceived.

He's the deceiver of the world. Now men love to believe lies, but you need to recognize these are satanic lies and it's satanic darkness and it's satanic power and we're up against principalities and powers and they're not lightweight. They are shrewd.

They are dark. They are wicked. They want to damn you.

They want to damn your children, your parents. They want to torture you. They want you full of suffering and misery.

They hate you and they hate the one in whose image we've been made and you better believe it's real and the fear is we don't even hardly know it. And he's been cast down to the earth, down to the earth. That's

what it says.

And his angels were thrown down with him and there's a whole bunch of them, likely a third of all the stars of heaven, a third of the angels. And it says the devil has come down to you in great wrath because he knows his time is short. Christian, where's the devil? Where did he get thrown to? Here.

And where are you? Here. And listen, you know why you don't want to go to sleep? The dragon became furious with the woman. Now you think about the woman.

It goes all the way back to Genesis. There is a woman and there is a godly stock and there is the seed of the serpent and back and forth. And that dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring.

Who are they? Those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Do we have anybody in here striving to keep the commandments of God and you hold to the testimony of Jesus Christ? Do we have any? Yeah. Raise your hand.

You know what scripture tells me? Satan has specifically targeted you. He is not random in this world. He is not indiscriminate.

There is one foe in this world. It is Christ and his people. And he has declared war against you.

And I'll tell you, brethren, it is time to wake up to this reality. You know, the mountains were surrounded with, they are demonic mountains. Brothers and sisters, demons, watch your house.

Where do you think the gospel is being plucked up like seed from a hardened path? In places like this. Don't think you reform theology. Don't think your five points keep the devil outside the walls.

It doesn't work. He has infiltrated your workplace, your streets, your neighbors, their houses, your schools, your prisons, your governments. He's there.

He's operating. He's sinister. He's foul.

And he is powerful. Folks, I don't say this to scare anybody. I say it to call you to battle.

Christian, Christian, don't walk around with your head in the clouds. Don't do that. The rest of the world does that.

The rest of the world is out there. They're living in their fantasy. Why? They're living for retirement.

They're living for their next car. They're living for their next paycheck. They're living for the weekend.

They're living for hot days like yesterday. Ruby and I were driving along. We're driving home.

We're recognizing this country lives for days like that, especially when they line up with the weekend and the nights are warm. You know, folks, they're living out there in the fantasy world. We should not be there.

We should be people that recognize the signs of the times. We should be people with our eyes open. When the sky gets red, we can say, well, the weather's going to be like this, but we ought to be able to, if anybody on the face of this earth ought to be able to look around and say, hey, this is how it is, it ought to be us.

This is no video game. This is no movie. Brethren, do you realize what's happening? Souls hang in the balance.

Your children's souls hang in the balance. Your neighbor's souls, the people of our city, Manchester and Birmingham and London and wherever you're from. Folks, this is a battle unto the death, and we're dealing with an enemy that is not merciful in the least.

He means to damn us. You have to recognize that. He wants to take us to hell with him.

He seeks to deceive, to destroy us. He wants us suffering under the wrath of God. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, beings of such iniquity and such magnitude and such power and cunning and dominion.

Do you remember Daniel? Daniel gave himself to prayer and fasting. And what happened? Here comes an angel. This angel says, you know, I would have been here three weeks ago.

Do you remember what happened to him? One called the Prince of Persia. Well, who's that? It's no human king. This is a diabolical presence of evil that specifically has some kind of authority and dominion over Persia.

It's leadership, the decisions of that leadership. It's people. There's a dominion there.

Do you believe with this hierarchy there's dominions over Manchester? I believe that. Do you believe that there's spiritual powers that are over the abortion industry in this country? You better believe it. Those demons roar with delight every time a little child is ripped limb from limb.

If you've got eyes to see, we just need to open them. You know what? There's also a Prince of Greece spoken about in Daniel. Such as, I mean, these are beings of such magnitude that you realize this Prince of Persia resisted this angel of God sent and dispatched to go to Daniel, but resisted for three weeks until Michael the archangel came and set free.

This is what's happening if we've got eyes to see. There is resistance. There is battle.

We're dealing with beings of, I mean, of such superior intellect whose motives are to destroy this country. Don't be surprised that it seems like all the decisions being made today are totally antithetical to scripture and Christ and Christianity and morals and uprightness. Don't be surprised at that.

Why? Because of this very reason. Authorities, cosmic powers. Do you recognize He is called the Prince of the power of the air, but not just that.

Who is at work in the sons of disobedience up and down these streets? He's at work. He's at work. A whole host of His fallen angels, they are at work.

The God of this world or the God of this age who blinds the minds of unbelievers. You think there's no devilish doings when we try to preach the gospel and nobody's responding? Who is it that's holding their eyes shut from seeing anything of this glory of the gospel of Christ? What's happening? And what does scripture say? The whole earth lies in the power of the evil one. And my question is this.

Are we even aware that there's a war? Do we recognize the signs of the times? Brethren, listen to me. Reformed people like to talk about, you know, a wretched man that I am. And we like to recount sins and

failures.

But this is one that I don't hear mentioned very often. Folks, we need to really be aware of just how deeply we do fail and sin and grieve the Son of God if we possess an unbelief that cannot move mountains. Let me tell you something.

Our disbelief, our unbelief is at the root of our perversity. Even as children of God. Listen, 11 of these 12 guys were believers, were they not? They were saved.

They were children of God. And they even had the faith to try to cast the demon out. But the thing is, it didn't produce any results.

And that's it. Jesus expects them. And if you think that me making the leap to say us is not biblical, I can challenge you at many places.

But listen, Jesus expects us to have the kind of faith that can challenge that kind of demon that we're confronted with and move those demonic mountains that make anything possible for us. Brethren, don't you want to be that? The kind of church, the kind of people that anything is impossible. There's nothing impossible for us.

I want to be that. Why couldn't we cast it out? Well, God's sovereign, God's ways are mysterious. God's will be done.

No, he puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of the disciples. There's not a hopeless situation. Brethren, I just ask you this.

I think, maybe I'll ask you the question. Has that perversity, that twistedness of our unbelief robbed us far too long of perhaps victories that we might have or could have? That's right here that Mark helps us. When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately.

Now isn't this very interesting? Matthew wants to say, well look, it's a faith issue. Mark doesn't even hit on the faith issue. He comes over and he says it's a prayer and fasting issue.

I love that. Why? Because when you put both accounts together and you actually compare both of them, they're both the same event, what was Jesus saying? When you put the two together, what's he really saying? I'll tell you what he's saying. Prayer and fasting of God's people are the very means for securing to ourselves the kind of faith that the disciples lacked.

That's what it's saying. I mean, you can't get that. I just ask you this.

Is fasting a bygone relic of another age? Fasting. I remember with among the FBC guys, one brother told me, I think he told me, I don't fast and I don't know anybody that does. I've been told that it's almost unknown in the UK.

I heard Paul Washer tell a story where he said there was a church and they were facing really difficult times. Perhaps they were going to split. He counseled that church to give themselves in entirety to a season of prayer and fasting.

They didn't do it and church basically was torn apart. Listen to Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edwards.

Now you see, we recognize Jonathan Edwards and we connect him with a time of great awakening. And you might say, well, the Spirit was flowing. Is it really necessary to give ourselves to extraordinary prayer and fasting? Listen to Edwards.

Just see if, I mean, connect the two. Edwards, time of great revival. And Edwards says this in some thoughts concerning the revival.

The state of the times. Now this is coming out of the first great awakening. So he sees things kind of going back to normal.

He says the state of the times. Here's a son of Issachar. The state of the times extremely requires a fullness of the divine Spirit in ministers.

We ought to give ourselves no rest till we have obtained it. And in order to do this, I should think ministers above all persons ought to be much in secret prayer and fasting. And also much in praying and fasting one with another.

It seems to me it would be becoming the circumstances of the present day. Get that? It would be becoming of the circumstances of the present day. He started by saying the state of the times.

I just ask you, brethren, what time are we in? Do we have any sons of Issachar here that can actually look out and know what the signs of the times are? Brethren, if there's anything that I want, I've come to this country, I want to see it rescued. I want to see it freed from this power. I want to see the churches full.

I want to see God setting people free. I want to see Christ getting the reward of his suffering. We ought not to be content to not see Christ having that reward.

What are the times if ministers, he says, it would be becoming the circumstances of the present day if ministers in a neighborhood would often meet together and spend days in fasting and fervent prayer among themselves, earnestly seeking for those extraordinary supplies of divine grace from heaven that we need at this day. If you think they needed it when they were coming out of the first great awakening, what do we need when it's been so long since when did they have an awakening here? One thing more I would mention concerning fasting and prayer, wherein I think there has been a neglect in ministers, and that is that although they recommend and much insist on the duty of secret prayer in their preaching, so little is said about secret fasting. It's a duty recommended by our Savior to his followers, just in like manner as secret prayer is.

It seems to me it is a duty that all professing Christians should practice and frequently practice. There are many occasions of both a spiritual and temporal nature that do properly require it. And there are many particular mercies that we desire.

Has anybody gotten to the place where you actually have desires that have culminated and risen high enough that you're ready to take some kind of radical action and say, enough! Enough of the powerlessness of the church! What do you desire? Does anybody desire the salvation of a child or a parent? Up and down your streets, do you watch the people go by held captive in the power of the evil one, deceived? Who in very few years, they're going to be where the torment is going to be unending. Do you just look at them and yawn? Are there not many particular mercies that we desire for ourselves or friends that it would be proper in this manner to seek God? I should think the people of God in this land at such a time as this is, would be in the way of their duty to do three times so much fasting and prayer as

they do. This is Edwards.

You know what? You think of those fallen angels, a child. They have no clarity about gender. They want to get some kind of sex change.

If you know anything about it, they're given to depression, suicidal. They cut their wrists and out into eternity they go. They take such delight in that.

Brethren, how are we going to fight? What are we going to do? They look at our dry baptistries collecting dust. Does anybody have an idea about what Israel ought to do? Has anyone seen a connection between the faith we ought to have in prayer and fasting? Jonathan Edwards tells us, I heard his name this week, David Brainerd. I just got done reading his diary for the second time in his journal that he wrote to the Scottish Society for the Advancement of Scriptural Knowledge.

You know what Jonathan Edwards says about Brainerd? Among all the many days he spent in secret fasting and prayer that he gives account of in his diary, there's scarce an instance of one. But what was either attended or soon followed with apparent success and a remarkable blessing and special incomes and consolations of God's Spirit very often even before the day ended. Brethren, we cannot go to battle powerlessly.

Where does come from? Jesus said this, when you fast, not if you do, you might. No, when you do. He tells us how to do it.

And he says that our Father who sees in secret will reward you. And I'll tell you one of the rewards, you'll be mountain movers. That's one of the rewards.

This kind goes out by prayer and fasting. If you had faith even as a mustard seed, you'd say to this mountain, move. Nothing would be impossible.

Great demonic obstacles that stand in our way are not being moved. You know it, brethren, we're not moving them. Apparently what happens is this, prayer and fasting.

What happens there? I set aside food specifically for seasons where I go into earnest wrestling with God. And you know what happens during those times? I begin to cry out and plead his promises. I begin to think of his character.

I begin to think about what he said in scripture. I begin to think about the fact that there is a reward that comes along with this fasting. I begin to think about all the reasons why, make my argument in the courtroom of God as to why God ought to be answering these prayers.

And you know what? Some dynamic happens. The Spirit of God begins to do something in us where that faith, that kind of faith that these disciples lacked, suddenly we become in possession of. And great things in the spiritual realm begin to give way before us.

That's the dynamic. You know what? I just had the attorney from Christian Concern visit my house this last week. And he told me about some prayer meetings that he's been in.

And he said, you know one thing he learned? There's a group of African pastors that he prays with. And he said, you know what makes these guys different? They never take no for an answer. If God doesn't answer today, they just believe that God's going to answer tomorrow.

And they keep after God. And they keep wrestling with Him. Brethren, I'm afraid.

Hyper-Calvinism has crept in, crept in. I'm afraid that we are so quickly ready to just throw this whole thing over into, well, God's providence and God is in control of all this. Look, our confidence is all together in a sovereign God.

But brethren, I'll tell you this. If we listen to the way Christ speaks and the way Scripture speaks to us, we don't want to take no for an answer. Why? Jesus' disciples said, teach us to pray.

And what did He say? He said, I'll tell you boys, if there's anything that tends to not get an answer to prayer, it is when we quit praying too soon. He said, be like that guy that goes to your friend at midnight and wants that bread and you keep going and you keep asking and you keep seeking and you keep knocking and you keep going because everybody who asks receives and everybody who seeks finds. You just keep going.

You keep going. Your Father is not reluctant to give. Your Father in heaven, He is more willing to give to you, His children, than you are to your children.

That's what the argument is. But what happens? We give up. We just, we just, we run out of gas.

What should we do about the government overreach? What should we do about abortion? What can we really do? Listen, you could, we can go camp outside and I'm not saying we should, we can go, we can go do our many things. We can vote, we can use the ballot box, we can use our voices, we can use the internet. Yes, we can do all these things.

But brethren, what are we going to do about the apathy of a nation or the apathy of the church in the nation? What are we going to do about our dry baptistries and dry eyes and lack of concern? Where, and where are we going to get the hearts where we actually weep for the people like Brainerd did? Brainerd could pray and fast all day long and get up and the snow would be melted around him and tears coming down his face and he's pleading for those American Indians and God wonderfully rushes in and makes Christ beautiful in their sight and there's a revival there among them. But where is that happening? Brethren, is there not a danger that we've fallen asleep? There's just apathy upon us. Listen, the devil does not fear church buildings and he doesn't fear programs and big crowds and full bank accounts and silly prayer meetings where we pray for an aunt Tilda's sore knee.

That's not it. The devil fears one thing. He fears the power of God.

And when we've got prayer and fasting that calls down the lightning of God upon the land, that's what he fears. That's what he doesn't like. When we rise up from prayer and fasting to proclaim the gospel, to show forth the compassion and the love of Christ, that's what he fears.

We want to be God powerful and dangerous. That's what we need. What terrifies the devil is one thing, and it's when God shows up.

Christian, listen to me. As much as the devil would like to destroy you and take you to hell and damn you, the true Christian is in the Father's hand and he can't get to you. But listen to me.

Listen to me. The greatest thing that he'd like to do now to you is just make you like the disciples, impotent. At least like the disciples in that account.

See, you can have the right doctrine. You can have John Calvin on the counter and you can go to church and not watch R-rated movies. And what's that to him? And he's going to come... Now listen, he's a liar.

He comes with deception and falsehood to disarm the child of God. God is sovereign. God determined before the foundation of the world what he would do.

Your prayer doesn't matter. Don't pray. God's in control.

You can't change what God's going to do. Don't pray. Prayer can't really matter.

God's going to do what God's going to do regardless. He comes in and he says, you're too busy to pray and fast. He comes, oh, seriously? You think you're going to waltz into the presence of Almighty God after the things you did today? You're too sinful.

You're too backward. Oh, Christian, you've had a hard day's work. You're too tired to pray and fast.

The garden needs attending. There are other things more important. It really doesn't work.

God isn't really interested. There's no war. Just go to sleep.

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