

Do You Have the Faith to Be Free

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon addresses the impact of involvement with pornography, highlighting the presence of unclean spirits in the industry and the need for individuals to surrender their hearts, souls, and minds to God. It emphasizes the importance of developing a faith that trusts God, is earnest in seeking deliverance, and perseveres through trials, drawing parallels to the story of a father seeking healing for his demon-possessed son.

Scripture: Mark 9:17, Matthew 17:20, Luke 18:1, 1 Peter 1:7

Topics: "Deliverance from Sin", "Faith and Perseverance"

Description

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Transcript

If you've been involved with pornography, I guarantee you that you have been interacting with demons, with unclean spirits. The pornography industry is demon-possessed from top to bottom, from the producers, the actors, the distributors. Every aspect of the pornography industry is laden with unclean spirits.

There are some very powerful entities in that realm. And basically, what you have done is kind of the opposite of what Jesus said is the greatest commandment. What is the greatest commandment? That we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, right? And what we have done, I include myself in this because I was just as bad as anybody.

What we did was we took our precious heart, our precious soul, our precious mind, those elements of our inner life that will go on for eternity, we took that and we gave it to these foul spirits and said, in essence, do your worst because I want what you're offering me. We have no one to blame but ourselves. It's not mom's fault or dad's fault.

It's not your wife's fault. It's not God's fault. We swung that door open as an act of our volition, right? We did that.

I did that. I willingly threw myself into that world and I loved it for a time. All right, so I just wanted to get that straight.

This is a story that is very meaningful to you guys today. And I hope that what the Lord will bring forth here this morning will help to answer, partially anyway, why you have had a hard time getting free from those oppressive spirits. But primarily, this is a story about faith.

Faith is, of course, the backbone of Christianity or Christian experience. Now, getting back in the flow of Jesus' life, and we've been going through his life for over a year now, if you remember that his life took a turn, or his ministry, I should say, took a turn when the people rejected him in John 6. They basically, when he started speaking about their inward life needs, they turned their back on him. And so from then on, his focus became not anymore about the outward ministry to people, but now he started focusing his attention on his disciples.

Jesus knows that in a few weeks, I would suspect, or months maybe, but not long, not long from now, these very type of people, these Jews in Palestine of that day are going to hang him on a cross. Jesus understands that. He understands that these people flock to him because he's a sideshow or because they want something from him.

They're not coming to follow him because they want to submit and surrender to him. All they want is they want something for themselves. And so his focus is on his disciples because his disciples up till now, they're like little kids around daddy.

They completely depend on daddy, but he's not going to be there. So they have to learn what it means to live by faith because he's going to be gone. And they are still pretty much out of it.

All right, so let's get into the story, starting with verse 14. When they, meaning Jesus and John and James and Peter, when they came back down the mountain from Transfiguration, when they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them. Immediately, when the entire crowd saw him, they were amazed and began running up to greet him.

And I think what it was was there's probably a holy glow about Jesus, that even those people, as out of it as they were, that they couldn't help but see something in his countenance. And he asked them, what are you discussing with them? Now, I don't know if he was addressing that to the disciples about the scribes or talking to the scribes about the disciples. I don't know, but this argument that's going on.

Jesus sees this and basically kind of confronts them about it. And one of the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought you my son possessed with the spirit, which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground.

And he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told your disciples to cast it out and they couldn't do it. So this is what this father has been going through for years with his son.

Can you imagine what this boy has experienced? It's all speculation, of course. I would guess he's probably a teenager now, maybe. And it says that he's been going through this since he was a child.

So for years, maybe 10 years, I don't know. For years, this family has been plagued by this foul spirit. I could say it about some of your families too.

Maybe not quite so dramatically, but the pain has been there, no doubt. But imagine what this boy has gone through. Think of how humiliating it has been for him, living in a closed-knit culture.

This isn't, you know, he's not like just one person in a city of three million or something who just kind of gets lost in the crowd and occasionally some people may see something going on. No, this is a probably, almost for certain, he lives in a small town. Everyone knows each other.

And he's known as the demon-possessed boy. And he's gotta go through life with that hanging on his head, kind of like some guys that are called a sex offender and they have to wear that and they have to report and all that for the rest of their lives. It's that kind of thing.

And he never knows, this boy, when he wakes up in the morning and he goes to school, which in those days would have been the synagogue, and he goes, he never knows when this thing's gonna just take him over and send him into a fit and make him look like he looks when he goes through that foaming at the mouth and everything. Imagine, you know, this teenager and girls around him that, you know, maybe he likes some particular girl, but he has no hope of ever having any kind of relationship with a girl. He's a demon-possessed boy.

And he's gotta go through life with that hanging around his neck. And think of how it's affected him physically. I mean, these convulsions are violent.

I mean, it may be something like, what do they call it, a grand mal or seizure, something like that. I mean, just overwhelming. It says that it slams him to the ground.

Luke's version says that the demon mauls him. He stiffens out, he grinds his teeth. His physical, his muscles and everything are out of his control.

This demon has locked him up and just jerking him and tearing him and throwing him. And that's what he's going through during one of these convulsions, one of these attacks. Also says that this demon has taken away his ability to hear and speak.

I don't know if it says hear, but definitely speak. It somehow has seized up his tongue. Now it can speak through him.

And I'll get to that in a second. It can speak, but the boy doesn't have the ability because this demon has somehow stopped him. He doesn't have the ability to just converse with people.

So he can't pour out his heart to any of his friends and say, you know, tell them what it's been like. He can't say anything. The only thing that comes out of him that we know for sure is Luke tells us that when this thing comes on him, he screams on top of all this.

We're told this was an unclean spirit. And I just wondered, I was thinking about this and you know, maybe there's times I wouldn't, it wouldn't surprise me a bit if there weren't times that this demon just starts speaking through him to people and saying the most vile, foul things. Maybe to some girl, you know, a next door neighbor, some young girl, and he just starts spewing out filth at this girl and no one, you know, parents see him coming, they all hide their kids from him.

Or maybe he's even doing vile things. In front of others. It's an unclean spirit that has complete control over his body.

Anytime at once. Think of the rejection he faces going through life. Being known as the demoniac.

The one that's filled and possessed and controlled by some foul spirit. And also keep in mind that underlying all of this is that Jewish mentality that you brought this on yourself. None of, no one in that culture would have thought of him as a victim.

No one would have. Imagine the despair and the hopelessness. And think of the father.

What he's gone through. The constant fear. You know, it says, it's gonna say here in a minute, the father tells us that the demon takes him over and if there's fire around, it throws him into the fire or throws him into water, trying to kill him.

It says that trying to destroy him. And so the father feels like, I can't let him out of my sight because this thing could come on him at any time and kill him. He's my baby, my boy.

And he's gotta go through life like that. This thing in their home, haunting them, making their lives miserable. So the father hears about this miracle worker named Jesus.

And he probably has gone looking for him before and hasn't been able to catch up to him or maybe he shows up and Jesus has just gone somewhere else and has disappeared. And maybe who knows how long this has gone on. He's gone out looking for Jesus.

But this time he comes and again, Jesus isn't there. But nine of his disciples are there. And he explains it to the disciples.

Can you please cast this thing out of my boy? Now in chapter six, we're told that Jesus had given his disciples authority over unclean spirits. They had this. It says they had cast out many demons.

So they had some experience at this. And you would think that they would have had the faith to come up and in the name of Jesus Christ, cast this thing out. But there's one thing that I think helps explain what happened.

And that's the Pharisees. Because these men, I believe, were demon possessed in a different kind of a demon, a religious demon. And they've been arguing with these disciples.

Now, you know, it says discussing that word sometimes used as arguing. What I think is they've gotten these nine away from Jesus. They can't stand up to Jesus.

They cannot refute him. He is such a master with words. And he sees right through them.

He knows exactly what they're gonna say, what they're thinking. He can just outdo them. Anytime they get in a conversation, they have finally given up trying to talk to him.

You know, so they've given up on Jesus, but now they've got nine of his disciples and they see this as an opportunity and they go after these nine disciples. Berating them and mocking them and scoffing at them and accusing them of who knows what. You know, we don't understand the tremendous peer pressure in the Jewish community to stay in the lines.

And Jesus has blown all that out of the water. And so I feel like these nine disciples were so beaten down by these scribes that when they were told to cast this thing out, they probably tried of come out in the

name of Jesus. They probably worked up their courage to say it, but that demon inside them, and I'll get to this in a little bit, but that demon inside them, I think, knows exactly how beaten down they are and how weakened they are.

Their faith has been depleted. It's like the atmosphere that could have been full of faith was just completely full of unbelief. So the disciples have all of that coming against them.

And we're gonna see what Jesus says here in a minute. I'll explain it in a second. But this is the setting that Jesus comes into.

So in verse 19, he says this, and most of the commentators believe, some of them believe he's mainly focused on the disciples because they haven't been able to do this. I don't think that's what it is. I think the disciples were kind of victims in this story because, yeah, let me just read this, verse 19.

He answered them and said, "Oh, unbelieving generation." This is the word pistos. Pistos is faith, belief, to believe, and ah is un, so unbelief. You are full of unbelief.

The generation, the entire Jewish nation, that's who he's referring to. This is the culture is full. Yeah, you're religious, but you're full of unbelief.

You don't even know God. How long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Now, I was thinking about this also. How long shall I put up with you? Let me ask you guys something.

You guys are all men. If you got married to a girl and you came to realize over a period of time, you know what? This girl doesn't love me. This girl just does nothing but uses me.

She's only in a relationship with me because of what she gets out of it. She has no concern whatsoever about me as a person. Wouldn't you feel like, how long am I gonna put up with you and your attitude? That's what Jesus is saying about this Jewish generation.

He has poured himself out. He's given and given and given and given of himself, sacrificially, unselfishly, giving, giving, giving, and all they do is use him. And I wonder if he doesn't have the same words for America today.

How long am I gonna put up with you? And you know, it says in Luke and Matthew, there's their stories here. He says, unbelieving and perverted generation because when you are in unbelief, your thinking becomes twisted. That's what the word literally means.

Perverted means twisted. We think of it, we immediately think in terms of sexuality. That's not what the point is.

It's that their thinking has become twisted. In other words, self is in control and God is not in existence there. It's basically word for word what Moses said to the people of his day in Deuteronomy 32.

This is a perverted generation, Moses said, full of unbelief. Verse 20, well, he says, bring him to me. It just amazes me.

Jesus amazes me. This is what he, the spirit he encounters with people, and yet he can't help himself. If there's a need and someone's crying out, it's like he can't help himself.

He's got to do something for them. And this is the answer right here, bring him to me. That's what we do with you guys.

We bring you to Jesus. He's the only hope you have. And so here in verse 20, they brought the boy to him.

When he saw him, now he, I take to mean the demon, or maybe it's the boy, but it's basically, it's the demon. When he saw him, immediately, the spirit threw him into a convulsion and falling to the ground, he began rolling and foaming at the mouth. And he asked his father, Jesus asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood.

Now, through this whole thing, this boy has been thrashing around and foaming and going through all of this stuff. And Jesus is totally got his composure, he's calm. He knows that he's got the power over this situation.

And it's like, Jesus, why don't you just jump in? Why are you letting this kid go through this? Why don't you just jump? Because he is after something bigger, even bigger than deliverance. He's trying to bring this father into faith. And so he's leading this conversation, just like he did with the woman in Samaria, the Samaritan woman.

Same thing he did with that conversation. Where am I? Verse 22. And has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him.

But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, if you can, it just says here, if you can, Jesus is pointing out his pathetic kind of faith. It's just kind of like, well, if you can do anything sort of thing, not exactly a real boat of conference there.

Jesus says, all things are possible to him who believes. I say that to you guys. All things are possible to him who believes.

All things are possible. You can have absolute freedom. It's there.

It's there for you. You can have absolute freedom. Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe, help my unbelief.

Someone said that this man was destitute of faith yet terrified of skepticism. Verse 25. When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it, you deaf and mute spirit, I command you come out of him and do not enter him again.

Praise God. Jesus has to bring his lesson to this man to a close because the people are starting to flock in. And you know, his days of public ministry are over.

He's not looking to be known as the public healer anymore. He doesn't want any more publicity. He's not looking for that.

Those days are over. The nation has rejected him as the Messiah. Verse 26.

After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said he's dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up and he got up. The hell that has dwelt in this family is finally gone.

Never to return. No more convulsions, no more seizures, no more foaming at the mouth, no more vile behavior. It's over.

Praise God, it's over. When he came, Jesus, when Jesus came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately. Why couldn't we drive it out? They're baffled.

You know, they don't get it because they've done it before. They've experienced this before. And Jesus basically gives three answers.

Let me go over them real quick, what he says. First of all, he says this kind, meaning there's some kind of class of demon involved here. Now, I don't know exactly what it means, but I know that in Matthew 12, it talks about spirits that are more wicked than other spirits.

And in Ephesians six, Paul gives us a whole litany, a whole picture of the satanic hierarchy of hell. So there's a range of demons and their power and their abilities and their specialties and all of that. I don't understand it.

No one really understands it. We just get little glimpses of it in the word. So it could be that this particular demon was a very powerful spirit.

That could be it. Or it could be that it had been in him for so long and had become so entrenched in him that getting it out was not gonna be an easy matter. Or it's possible that it's because it's an unclean spirit.

And what I'm talking about now is when an unclean spirit gets in a man, who has his natural sexual drive, sexual urges, which is the most powerful appetite practically a man has. And when the two become entwined, it is very hard to separate that and get that demon out of there. So I don't know which of those it is or how much one plays, I don't know, but somehow that has something to do with it.

I'm sure of that. And Matthew gives us a couple more reasons that they couldn't get it out. In Matthew 17, he says, "Because of the littleness of your faith, "the littleness of your faith.

"For truly I say to you, if you have faith "the size of a mustard seed, "you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there and it will move "and nothing will be impossible to you." This is just typical biblical hyperbolic metaphor here. He's not talking about literally throwing a mountain over. He's talking about huge difficulties that feel like mountains.

And he's saying, if you have faith like a mustard seed. And then he says, but this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. So he gives us a couple of hints here.

One is that the littleness of your faith, but this has got to be confusing to these disciples. Are you guys staying up with me? You're getting it, right? Are you getting it what I'm saying? This doesn't make sense. You just said, because of the littleness of your faith, and now you're saying, if I have faith as a tiny little mustard seed, that's all I need.

Which is it? That's what I would say. All right, Jesus, which is it? Just explain it, would you? I wouldn't say it like that. He's not talking about size when he's talking about the mustard seed.

I know I use the word size, but let me explain. If he was just referring to size, he would say a grain of sand or something, or an ant or something, no, not an ant. I don't know, a grain of sand.

A mustard seed is tiny, but it has life in it. And that life, Jesus uses it in one of his parables. A mustard seed becomes a great tree.

You know, if you have the life of God in you, then you have a faith that is adequate to accomplish great things. You know, so it may feel like a tiny little spark of faith in you, but if you have that in you, nothing is impossible to you. And I can say that from much experience.

I remember my early days, you know, when I felt like I was hanging in there by a thread, you know, but there were, I mean, some miraculous, powerful things were happening in our early days of this ministry, because somehow I had the faith to believe God to do what he's put in my heart. And he did it. Even as I was so full of myself and so out of it and all those things, God did it.

So that's what it's referring to there. But he also mentions one more thing, prayer and fasting. And I'm gonna get to this here in a minute.

I'll explain that more here in a second. What I wanna do now for a few minutes is I wanna go over three components of the kind of faith you need to be free inside. Anybody interested in knowing that? Couple of you, okay.

All right. You guys haven't been much of an audience today, but I'll still go on. First of all, and this is probably, maybe this is the most important, I guess.

Yeah, it is. You need a faith that trusts God. It's absolutely crucial.

It's absolutely crucial. Because faith is trust. You know, when we say about someone, I have faith in so-and-so, what we're saying is I trust him, right? That's what we're saying about him.

If I say I have faith in Pastor Ed, that means I trust Pastor Ed. You know, many professing Christians, I guess all professing Christians would make the statement, I put my trust in Christ. It's one of those nice little religious statements that we make, that we've learned to make in the evangelical movement.

But if we can start to look at their lives, you realize it's not really true. Really, their trust in their day-to-day life is in themselves. They go to church, all that, but they don't really have a trust in the Lord.

A trust in the Lord means you are surrendered. It means you are in submission. It means you are looking to walk in the will of God all the time.

That's what it means to trust him. You are completely putting yourself in his hands to do what he wants you to do. That's what it means to trust the Lord.

Trust comes through intimate knowledge of someone. You can't trust someone you don't know, right? If you go to Walmart or wherever, and you go to a cashier or someone there at the store, and you start talking to them, we don't know them. It doesn't matter if they seem like they're nice people.

You're not gonna put your trust in that person. You're gonna put your trust in someone you know, someone you've had experience with, someone you have known over a long period of time. That's what it means to trust someone.

It comes through that kind of intimate knowledge. Now, I trust my wife. We've been together 44 years.

44 years. How many of you are less than 44? This ministry is 37 years old. How many of you are less than 37? All right, that's it.

You guys don't know nothing. I've been doing this 37 years. You know, so anyway, my wife, I trust my wife.

And someone could come up to me and say, we watched War Room last night. You guys seen War Room? Yeah, so you remember that part where the wife gets the text from some girlfriend. Hey, I see your husband with some girl at this restaurant in Atlanta.

You know, what's up with that? What's he doing? Well, if someone texted me that about my wife, I would just absolutely scoff at him, you know? There's no way. I know my wife. If someone said, you know, your wife's going around bad mouthing you, buying your back to everyone.

There's no way I would believe that. Why? Because I know her intimately. We've lived together.

We're around each other all the time and have been for a long period of time. And at some level, it's that way for me with the Lord. I know what he's like.

I know that I know that he's good and merciful. I know it with all my heart because I've seen him at work. I've seen what he's done in my life and in so many other lives.

All I have seen from God is mercy and goodness. That's why I trust him. I didn't just trust him because like I made a decision.

Okay, I'm gonna trust you. No, it came as he proved himself to me over time in a lot of different circumstances. And TJ, don't you ever interrupt me like that again.

It all comes down to relationship. But here's the reality. Most people aren't all that interested in having a relationship with God.

They just wanna know what they're gonna get out of it for themselves. They want eternal life. They want their problems to go away.

They want his blessings, but they don't really care about him. You guys came here to rid yourself of this oppressive, unclean spirit. But to what end? Why? What was your motive? Think about it.

Are you looking for a deliverance so you can have a trouble-free life? You wanna get rid of the problems this has caused you? Or do you want a deliverance because your marriage is on the rocks and your wife has given you an ultimatum? Or is it because something very strong inside you is saying, no, I want this deliverance because this foul thing is standing between me and my God. Listen, God is a person. He's not a cosmic bellhop just there to dish out the blessings.

He is a person with feelings. And he's made no bones about his great, great love for you and his great desire to be in a meaningful relationship with you. He's made no bones about that, right? He's proven it to you time and time again.

That's all he wants. What kind of a God is this that can take so much abuse and rejection and lack of interest and ingratitude and still keep coming to us saying, but I love you. Then I want to be in a relationship with you.

The question is, do you want that? Or are you just looking to get something from him like so many others? Number two, you need a faith that's earnest. Apathy is the enemy of faith. You guys have been in a spiritual malaise for years just doing American life and going to church on Sunday.

Jesus says here, he gives us an answer. This kind comes out through prayer and fasting. Now I know some versions don't have fasting in there.

It doesn't matter. It's still true. Fasting has a place in the spiritual life.

So don't worry about that. It is true that praying, asking, seeking, knocking and going without food or whatever it is as a means of expressing your earnest desire to be free. That's the opposite of apathy.

Apathy and unbelief go hand in hand. They're one in the same, really. I mean, they're not exactly the same, but they're one in the same.

Two sides of the same ugly coin. You know, when you get to the place where you really start crying out in the depths of your being, I did. I didn't have a program.

I didn't have anyone mentoring me. I didn't have anybody. My wife was a cheerleader.

She was that for me, but she didn't have any answers for me. And all I knew to do, I was like this father. All I knew to do was to go to Jesus and cry out and plead.

Why don't I see more of that in this place? I looked up these words, desperate and earnest. Let me give you some synonyms for desperate. Hopeless, panicked, agonized, dismayed, distraught, acute.

These are words that are full of pathos, full of deep meaning, deep emotional urgency. The opposite of apathy. Earnest, some synonyms, sincere, genuine, serious, wholehearted, devoted, ardent, committed, determined, zealous.

Does that describe you? Does that describe you? Would you say that that's your daily heart? Number three, you need a faith that perseveres. You guys should be able to relate to what this man said. I believe you had enough faith in you, just a tiny little bit in you, that you uprooted your life and you came to Kentucky to live in this place.

You didn't know what you were walking into. You came here full of fear and doubt and maybe last ditch, but you got here. You had enough faith to get you here.

But then when you started seeing the battle, your faith started waning. Now you need to cry out, God, I do believe, but help my unbelief. It's taking me over, Lord.

A lot of people start off well. And you know, one of the things that talks about over and over again in the New Testament, never actually in the entire Bible, people that start off well and backslide and fall away and they're never heard from again. Reminds me of a documentary I saw once of a girl, Christian girl that went over to Afghanistan.

Just so happens she, I guess it was in 01, she got there and she was just going over there. God called her to go there and help people, to just minister to them and do what she could to help those people. And she showed a Jesus movie to some people one night and the Taliban arrested her, threw her into jail.

And she, you know, later is telling the story. And she said, after being in that jail and being, actually, I think she went in several jails or prisons or whatever over a period of time, fouled, vile places. And she said, I lost my faith.

You know, what she started off with full of idealism. Idealism, that isn't faith. You know, I mean, maybe it started off as faith, but she found out when she got into the battle that her faith wasn't what she thought it was.

We need the kind of faith you see in Luke 18, the story of the widow who keeps going and badgering that poor judge, badgering him, badgering him, badgering him. I need relief from my enemy, my adversary. That's what you guys have to have, pounding on the door of heaven until you get the freedom.

Instead of this malaise of just dragging yourself through day after day. You're in a trial. I think all of you would agree with that.

Pure Life Ministries is a trial from beginning to end, nine months long, right? We all agree with that? What's the purpose of a trial? Just a criminal trial, what's the purpose of it? Someone just say it out. No, a criminal trial, what's the purpose of it? Who's saying that? To get to the truth, right? Okay, this is the guy that's got it. Why are you sitting on the back row? You're in a trial, but it's to bring out the reality of what's inside you.

That's what a trial does. It shows the reality of your faith. You getting this, Carla? You better.

Peter said this. This was not long before he was hung on a cross upside down. He said that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire, meaning your faith, tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Your faith, man, when you make that conscious decision in the face of the hardship and trial, in the face of going through what you go through here, you make a decision inside, Lord, I don't care what it costs me. I don't care the price. I don't care what I've got to go through.

I want to be free and I want to walk with you. That means everything to the Lord. It means more than universes for one man to make that consecration inside.

It's easy to believe when you're on the mountaintop with Jesus, right? Everything's easy to believe then. But when you get down into the valley full of demons and foul spirits that are assaulting you and attacking you and tempting you, that's when your faith is gonna be proven out for what it is. Millions upon millions of Christian men are being enslaved by sexual lust.

But in 1986, God raised up Pure Life Ministries to offer a way of escape to those taking captive by pornography and sexual addiction. Everything this ministry teaches, preaches, writes, and counsels is built upon the unwavering truth of the word of God. This is why we exist, to lead people into the truth that will set them free.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/KR1o2a2QgrM.mp4>

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