

## **“Beyond the Wardrobe”**

### **Mark 9:14-29**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In this world, all that we see with our eyes is not *all* that there is. In fact, there is another whole world out there that few of us are aware of on a day to day basis. And there are forces in *that* world that do impinge on our day to day lives.

How many of you have read C. S. Lewis’ book The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe or have seen the movie or both?

Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy had been sent away to a house of an old professor. As they were exploring the many rooms in this old house, Lucy found herself in a room that was empty except for a big, old wardrobe.

She tried the door of the wardrobe and finding it unlocked, she opened the door. Stepping inside, she made her way through the long fur coats and smells of mothballs until those fur coats turned into cold, powdery snow, tree branches—AND ANOTHER WHOLE WORLD! “Beyond the wardrobe”, she had stepped into a another whole world called Narnia—a world of talking beasts, dwarfs, giants, fauns, an evil White Witch and the Great Lion, Aslan.

She returns to her world through the giant wardrobe and finding her brothers and sister, she—with great excitement—tells them about that other world “beyond the wardrobe.” She says to them, “It’s –it’s a magic wardrobe. There’s a wood inside it, and it’s snowing, and there’s a Faun and a Witch and it’s called Narnia; come and see!”

At first, her siblings don’t believe her. “You’re crazy! You’re making it all up! You’ve lost your marbles! You’re lying!” they would say to her. Until finally one day, they find themselves *together* in the magic wardrobe. Closing the door behind them, they make there way through the long fur coats, the smells of moth balls and into that another whole world—the world of Narnia.

And when it comes to the spirit world—the world of angels and demons—we tend to respond as Peter, Susan and Edmond did to Lucy that day.

We have doubts. We wonder if they are really a part of our day to day world...

But this morning, I want to invite you to walk with me into another whole world “beyond the wardrobe.” While a world called “Narnia” lay *beyond the wardrobe* for Lucy and her siblings, this morning I would like to invite you to walk with me beyond another kind of wardrobe into another whole world—the spirit world.

My invitation to you is to “come and see.”

You and I are part of a western Christian culture that sees reality in two tiers.

The upper tier is the transcendent world where God, faith, and the sacred reside. It is a world that is understood through *religion*,

The lower tier is the empirical world. It is a world understood through *science* and the physical senses. It is a world of germs, i-pods, cell phones and business decisions.

As Christians with a western mentality we tend to see reality in terms of these two tiers. Either we relate to God through our faith or we relate to our world through that which we can see, test and evaluate.

But there is another whole tier that most of us are missing. Yes, there’s another whole world out there! We are missing what’s “beyond the wardrobe.”

Dr. Paul Hiebert, a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, calls this tier the “excluded middle”—because although it is very real we are not aware of it in our day to day lives. It has become “excluded” from our normal day to day existence.

It is the very real world of spiritual forces active on this earth. It is a world of angels and demons. Yes, this world includes the kingdom of darkness.

The Apostle Paul writes about that another whole world in Eph. 6. “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*”

When Paul writes about the spiritual battle in the heavenlies, he is referring to the spiritual realm—that *middle* tier. It is a kingdom of darkness inhabited by demons and governed by Satan, the ruler of this world. It’s a world that is to most of us “beyond the wardrobe.”

**BUT HOW DOES THAT WHOLE OTHER WORLD AFFECT US IN REALITY, ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS AS WE’RE WASHING THE DISHES, DRIVING OUR CAR, PLANTING MARIGOLDS, SURFING THE NET, AND INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE?**

The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6: “*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.*”

Paul is saying that you and I are in a day to day struggle against the devil’s schemes. They are schemes that we have to resist and stand against daily.

What are the schemes of the devil and his cohorts?

They are out to *tempt* you, *deceive* you and *accuse* you.

Neil Anderson in his book “The Bondage Breaker” describes the impact of the demonic on our day to day lives this way:

Imagine that you are standing at one end of a long, narrow street lined on both sides with two-story apartments. At the other end of the street stands Jesus Christ, and your Christian life is the process of walking down the long street with you eyes on the Author and Finisher of your faith. There is absolutely nothing in the street that can keep you from walking toward Jesus by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. So when you receive Christ, you fix your eyes on Him and start walking.

But since this world is still under the dominion of Satan, the apartments on either side are inhabited by beings who are committed to keeping you from reaching your goal. They have no power or authority to block your path or even slow your step, so they hang out of the windows and call to you, hoping to turn your attention away from your goal and disrupt your progress.

Some will tempt you by saying, “Hey, look over here! I’ve got something you really want. It tastes good, feels good, and is a lot more fun than your boring walk down the street. Come on in and take a look.

Others will accuse you by saying, “Who do you think you are? God doesn’t love you. You will never amount to anything. Surely you don’t believe that bit about being saved.” Satan’s emissaries are masters at accusation, especially after they

have distracted you through temptation. One minute they're saying, "Try this; there's nothing wrong with it." Then, when you yield, they're right there taunting, "See what you did! How can you call yourself a Christian when you behave like that?" Accusation is one of Satan's primary weapons in his attempt to distract you from your goal.

Other remarks which are hurled at you as you walk down the street sound like this: "You don't need to go to church today. It's not important to pray and read the Bible every day. Some of the New Age stuff isn't so bad." That's deception, and it is Satan's most subtle and debilitating weapon. You will often hear these messages in first-person singular: "I don't need to go to church today, pray, read my Bible," and so on. Satan knows you will be more easily deceived if he can make you think the thought was yours instead of his.

What is the enemy's goal in having his demons jeer you, taunt you, lure you, and question you from the windows and doorways along your path? He wants to slow you down, stop, sit down, and if possible, give up your journey toward Christ. He wants you to doubt your ability to believe and serve God. Remember: He has absolutely no power or authority to keep you from steadily progressing in your walk toward Christ. And he can never again own you, because you have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and you belong to Him. But if he can get you to listen to the thoughts he plants in your mind, he can influence you. And if you allow him to influence you long enough through temptation, accusation, and deception, he can stop your progress (The Bondage Breaker; Neil Anderson, pp. 119-120).

The degree of spiritual freedom we experience as Christians is somewhere within a continuum: from laying out a welcome mat for the devil and his influence by allowing a root of bitterness to remain in our hearts (Eph. 4:26) to allowing strongholds—those unhealthy, fleshly patterns of thought that cause us to live independently of God—to control our thoughts and govern our minds (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The more strongholds we allow to remain in our lives, the more control Satan and his demons are able to exert in our lives.

And no one loses control to Satan overnight. It's a gradual process of deception and yielding to his subtle influence.

The fact is, what lies "beyond the wardrobe" is very real and touches us personally and those around us.

Back when I was a pastor, a Christian counselor invited me to sit in with him during a session in which he was working with a man who was living under the influence of demons. I was new at this and he thought that the experience would help me grow in this area of my ministry. And so I joined him as a pray-er.

I remember that as the demons began to manifest themselves in this man (who didn't know me from Adam), he turned to me and said, "What are you doing here? You are just a rookie!"

Satan and his demons are active in this world and in the lives of people around us.

With the help of this same Christian counselor, we worked with a man who had opened himself up to demonic influences over a long period of time. He had an

uncontrollable anger. And when the demons manifested themselves, he could put his hand through two cement blocks. He could be very destructive. While he was unable to write, he would draw pictures of the demons he saw in his head.

After working with him over an extended period of time, he experienced freedom in Christ. He was delivered—*for one week*. From what I remember, during that one week, he was able to write. He was free of those destructive, demonic influences. But the next Sunday, he wasn't in church. He didn't give God the glory. And he returned to the same state he was in before!

The spirit world out there is very real.

Besides the normal day to day temptations, deceptions and accusations hurled at me by Satan and his demons, I've experienced personal, physical attacks.

At crisis moments in my life or at defining moments in the growth of our church (back when I was a pastor), I would wake up in the night unable to move. I would be in the state of total paralysis—not able to move a muscle (like I was pinned to the bed), until I prayed against it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then I would be free.

There IS another whole world out there. And whether we like it or not, or want to accept it or not, this world is just as real as you and me being in this sanctuary this morning.

Peter, Susan, Edmond and Lucy all “came” and “saw” what lay “beyond the wardrobe” and their lives were forever changed.

And so can yours.

You cannot *actively* engage the forces of darkness and remain the same. Engaging the enemy will change *your* life. In the process of engaging the enemy, you yourself will be changed! Spiritual battles are God's opportunities to mature you and grow you as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Engaging in spiritual battles will expose your weaknesses, shortcomings and vulnerabilities. It will expose and lay bare your sinfulness and things that need surrendered to the Lord Jesus.

And so, engaging the enemy and his demonic forces will not always be comfortable!

Remember: “God is more concerned about your character than your comfort.” Engaging in the spiritual battle is yet another opportunity for God to work on your character!

**This morning God wants to change us into believers who not only recognize the spiritual battle—that another whole world—but who also are ready and prepared to exercise Christ's authority over the forces of darkness in that another whole world.** And He wants us to exercise that authority in our own lives and in the lives of others.

In our scripture text this morning, we see those who “came” and “saw.” The crowd, the teachers of the Law, Jesus' disciples and the father with the demonized son *all* “came” and “saw.”

And in their response to the forces of darkness, we learn *four principles* that will change us into believers who are ready and prepared to exercise Christ's authority over Satan's activity in us and in the lives of others.

## II. WE CAN EXERCISE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY OVER SATAN'S ACTIVITY IN OUR LIVES AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS IF WE REMEMBER 4 PRINCIPLES FROM THIS STORY.

### A. Jesus wants to turn spectators into participants (vv. 15-15, 25)

First, if we are going to exercise Christ's authority over Satan and all his activity, we must remember this: Jesus wants to turn spectators into participants.

In v. 14 we read, "*When they [that is Jesus and Peter, James and John] came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.*"

In the midst of this large crowd are a desperate father and his son who is possessed by a demon, an evil spirit.

The Greek work translated "possessed by a spirit" literally means "to be under the control or influence of a demon." A better translation would be "to be demonized."

A demonic spirit had inhabited his body and was controlling him and manifesting itself in him in many different and violent ways.

It would seize him and throw him to the ground. He foamed at the mouth, gnashed his teeth and became stiff as a board. It would even try to take his life, throwing him into fire or water.

And the father, in desperation, goes to the nine disciples and asks them to drive out the demon. When they could not, he comes to Jesus and says: "*Teacher, I brought you my son...*" And then a little later he gives this desperate plea: "*If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.*"

Can you hear the desperation in his voice?

No doubt he had tried everything to help his son. He is probably at the end of his rope. And now, even those who he expected would be able to do what their Master could do—Jesus' disciples—were unable to bring relief and freedom to his son.

He is totally desperate. He's at his wits end.

*This desperate father was surrounded by a throng of people.*

But does anyone from the crowd come to the aid of this desperate father and his demonized son?

No. Not one person.

Instead of coming to the aid of this desperate father and his demonized son, we find this great crowd gathered around the teachers of the law as these experts in the Law were arguing with Jesus' nine disciples (who had just failed to drive out the demon).

The spiritual battle raged right in front of the eyes of all those in this great throng of people. But no one came to the aid of this desperate father and his tortured son.

Those present in the crowd that day were *spectators* rather than *participants* in the spiritual battle.

And in v. 15 we read: "*As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.*"

They were literally "struck with amazement" at Jesus' presence.

The interesting thing is this. While they were awestruck by Jesus' presence—no doubt by His authority and power—they lacked the authority and power themselves to help his son and even the desire to bring him to Jesus.

The crowd.

They were more interested in seeing Jesus than they were in coming to the aid of this desperate father and demonized son. They were more interested in being awestruck by Jesus' presence than they were in exercising His authority over the powers of darkness.

They were fanatical fans of Jesus rather than passionate, prepared participants operating in Jesus' name and under His authority.

They were mere *spectators* rather than active *participants* in the battle.

That's why in v. 25 we read, "*When Jesus saw the crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit...*"

JESUS WASN'T INTO DRAWING CROWDS AND IMPRESSING THROGS OF PEOPLE. JESUS WAS INTO FORMING DISCIPLES WHO HAD AUTHORITY OVER THE FORCES OF DARKNESS, WHO HAD AUTHORITY TO TEAR DOWN STRONGHOLDS AND DRIVE OUT DEMONS.

JESUS IS IN THE BUSINESS OF TURNING FANS INTO PLAYERS, SPECTATORS INTO PARTICIPANTS.

When you come face to face with Satan's activity in your life or in the life of someone else, when demonic forces interfere with your life or the life of someone close to you, are you a fan who stands by to see what's going to happen or are you a passionate player, one who's been prepared to take authority over Satan and all his activity? Are you a spectator, or are you a participant? Are you "in the game" or are you "on the bench?"

Satan will do everything he can to keep you benched or in the seats.

It was his team's final home game of the season. He entered the game with just 4 minutes left in the game. It was his first and only appearance for the Athena varsity team in a Rochester, NY suburb. Up until that moment--throughout the whole season, he warmed the bench.

His season on the hardwood lasted just 4 minutes.

But in those 4 minutes, Jason McElwin sank one two-pointer and *six* 3-pointers.

Why did someone who was so ready and able to sink 3 pointers sit on the bench game after game after game until 4 minutes left in the final home game?

He had autism.

Autism kept him on the bench when he could have been sinking 3 pointers all season long!

What's keeping you on the bench? What's keeping you from getting involved in exercising Christ's authority over the forces of darkness?

For me, I think it was a lack of awareness. For a long time the spirit realm just wasn't a part of my day to day life. I just wasn't aware of how the forces of darkness interfere with my life and the lives of others around me. I had yet to see the reality "beyond the wardrobe." *Lack of awareness* can keep you on the bench.

Others doubt the reality of the spirit realm. They doubt that demons really exist, let alone influence our day to day lives. *Doubt* can keep you in the seats.

Some of us don't want to get involved in the spiritual battle because battles are messy. We feel comfortable just the way we are. Who would want to jeopardize that comfort? The *pursuit of comfort* can keep you off the hardwood.

Today God is looking for mature disciples of His who are ready and willing to get off the bench and into the game. He is looking for those who are willing to go "beyond the wardrobe" and into the spiritual battle.

Churches services packed with crowds of people aren't necessarily a sign of a spiritually mature church. A spiritually mature church is full of people who've been transformed from *spectators* into *participants*--participants who are ready and willing to venture "beyond the wardrobe" and engage Satan and all his demonic strongholds.

This morning if you are a *Sunday morning spectator*, just part of the crowd, God wants to make you into an *active participant*—one who is ready and prepared to exercise Christ's authority over Satan's activity in our lives and in the lives of others (one who is ready to pray down strongholds in Jesus' name).

## **B. Jesus wants to turn our biblical knowledge into spiritual power (v. 14)**

Not only does the Lord Jesus want to turn spectators into participants, but, secondly, He wants to turn our biblical knowledge into spiritual power.

We read in v. 14: "*When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.*"

Here is a father desperately searching for help. His son is under the debilitating, life-threatening control of a demon.

And in the midst of this desperate need, the "teachers of the law" are arguing with Jesus' disciples, who had just failed to drive out the demon.

Who are these "teachers of the law?"

In Jesus' day, the teachers of the law, also known as scribes or rabbis, examined and studied the intricacies of the Law of Moses. They were the experts in the law. They knew the Law of Moses backwards and forwards. They were the theological experts—the theologians of the day.

Some of these theological experts were even known to cast out demons and carried out a ministry of exorcism (of driving out demons).

Are these theological experts helping this desperate father and his son?

Unbelievably enough, not at all! They do not lift a finger to help this demonized son!

In the face of such desperate spiritual need, we find these experts in the Law, the theologians of the day, arguing with Jesus' disciples. No doubt they were arguing over the fine theological points about why the disciples of Jesus were unable to drive out the demon.

And while their minds were full of biblical knowledge, their hearts were void of spiritual power and authority. It was no wonder that people said of *Jesus*: "*He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes*" (Mt. 7:29).

You know what?

*The benchmark of a mature Christian is not necessarily found in how much biblical knowledge he or she possesses.*

It is possible to have a lot of spiritual knowledge and at the same time lack spiritual authority over Satan and his evil cohorts. It is possible to very ably argue about and defend our favorite theological doctrines, while at the same time lacking the ability to engage in the spiritual battle.

And the fact is, biblical knowledge is good! Every mature disciple of Jesus should be growing in the knowledge of God's Word. In fact, our spiritual authority must be absolutely grounded in the authority of God's Word.

But the real question before us is this: "*Is our biblical knowledge translating into spiritual authority over the evil, debilitating influences of Satan in our lives and in the lives of others around us?*"

The teachers of the law that day were so focused on their knowledge of the Scriptures that they were distracted from the spiritual battle raging right in front of their very eyes.

Could it be that Satan gets us so focused on the biblical knowledge we possess and the ability to argue about and defend our favorite doctrines that he is able to distract us from the real spiritual battles raging in us and around us?

Reminds me of the coalition's strategy against Saddam Hussein at the onset of the first Gulf War—that strategy that would drive Saddam Hussein and his forces from Kuwait. Do you remember what General Schwarzkoff's strategy was? Our forces feigned a full-fledged frontal attack from the gulf.

And the Iraqi forces fell for it.

While they were marshaling their forces to defend the Kuwaiti coast, the coalition forces began to systematically cut their forces into pieces from their rear.

And Satan loves to do the same thing in the church. He knows that if he can get our attention *off* the real battle and *onto* filling our minds with biblical knowledge and the ability to defend our favorite doctrines, he will be able to cut us apart in the rear—and we won't even know it.

This morning you can effectively engage the forces of Satan. You can effectively exercise Christ's authority over Satan's evil, destructive influences in your life and in the life of others—if you allow the Lord Jesus to turn your biblical knowledge into spiritual power.

### **C. Jesus wants to turn doubters into believers**

Jesus not only wants to turn spectators into participants. And He not only wants to turn our scriptural knowledge into spiritual power. But thirdly, the Lord Jesus wants to turn doubters into believers.

When this desperate father says to Jesus "I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not", Jesus replies in exasperation: "*O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?*"

With these words of rebuke, Jesus sought to turn His doubting disciples into believers.

That word translated "unbelieving" implies a lack of faith or doubt in Christ's power and ability to save, to help, to act or to aid. They doubted whether or not Christ was able, through them, to drive out this kind of demon. They doubted whether or not Christ was able.

You know what?

**DOUBT CAN BLOCK THE FLOW OF GOD'S POWER WHEN IT COMES TO OVERCOMING THE FORCES OF DARKNESS. DOUBT IN CHRIST'S ABILITY TO ACT AND TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE CAN KEEP YOU FROM EXPERIENCING**

CHRIST'S POWER OVER SATAN'S ACTIVITY IN YOUR LIFE AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

NOT ONLY CAN DOUBT BLOCK THE FLOW OF GOD'S POWER, BUT DOUBT CAN SPREAD FROM YOU TO OTHERS!

The father had come to Jesus' disciples asking them to drive out the demon.

You see, back in Jesus' day a disciple was expected to be able to do what their Master could do.

And because Jesus drove out demons, this desperate father fully expected that Jesus' disciples would be able to do the same for his son.

But, in the end, their attempts to drive out the demon end in failure. And the father seeing their doubt and seeing their failure, says to Jesus: "*I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.*"

Evidently the disciples' doubt in Jesus' ability to act was contagious--and spread to the father.

This is why the father says to Jesus: "*But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.*"

After witnessing Jesus' disciples' failure to cast out the demon, he wondered even if Jesus himself had the power to drive out the demon. He doubted whether or not Christ's power was greater than Satan's power. He began to doubt whether or not everything, in fact, was actually possible for God.

"*If you can...*" They are words laced with doubt.

AND THE DISCIPLES' DOUBT BEGAN TO SEW SEEDS OF DOUBT IN THIS DESPERATE FATHER AS WELL!

Remember this. Doubt in your life can affect someone else's life. Doubt spreads. When we give in to the Tempter, when we begin to believe the Accuser, when we fall for the Deceiver and live a defeated Christian life BECAUSE OF DOUBT IN OUR HEARTS, others around us can begin to doubt Christ's ability to overcome the Evil One in *their* lives as well!!!

REMINDS ME OF A VINE ALONG THE SIDE OF OUR HOUSE. THIS VINE IS NASTY! IT GROWS A LITTLE WAYS, AND THEN PUTS DOWN NEW ROOTS. IT, THEN, GROWS SOME MORE AND THEN PUTS DOWN NEW ROOTS AGAIN. IT KEEPS ON DOING THIS UNTIL IT HAS SPREAD ITS CHOKING TENACLES EVERYWHERE—UNTIL IT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO ERADICATE!

DOUBT IS LIKE THIS.

IT FIRST PUTS DOWN ROOTS IN OUR HEARTS. IF WE DOUBT JESUS' ABILITY TO OVERCOME THE POWER OF SATAN IN OUR LIVES, NOT ONLY WILL WE LIVE A DEFEATED, POWERLESS LIFE, BUT WE CAN EVEN CAUSE OTHERS TO DOUBT JESUS' ABILITY TO ACT IN ***THEIR*** LIVES! AND A ROOT OF DOUBT BEGINS TO TAKE ROOT IN ***THEM***. AND DOUBT CONTINUES TO SPREAD TO OTHERS UNTIL ITS TENACLES ARE EVERYWHERE!

Sometimes I wonder: "How many people have I infected with doubt because I doubted Christ's overcoming power in my life?"

Not only did Jesus work to turn His disciple's doubt to belief, but He also seeks to turn this desperate father's doubt into belief.

When the father said "*But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us,*" Jesus replies: "*If you can? Everything is possible for him who believes.*"

Jesus was saying to him that day, “Are you doubting my ability to act on your son’s behalf? Place your confidence completely and totally in me and my ability to drive out the demon. Place your trust in the fact that I AM ABLE. Everything is possible for him who believes!”

And the father’s doubts began to turn into belief.

The father cries out: “*I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!*”

Perhaps this morning you are struggling with Satan’s activity or influence either in your life or in the life of someone else. Satan’s demons are hanging out the windows lining the street of your Christian life and they are taunting you with temptations, accusations and deceptions. And like the disciples, you have discovered that you don’t have the strength to overcome. Like the father, your confidence in Christ’s ability to do and to act is faltering.

This morning acknowledge your doubts before the Father. Place your full confidence in the fact that HE IS ABLE. It’s crying out as the father did so sincerely and honestly: “*I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!*”

And like He did for His disciples that day and like He did for that desperate father, He will begin to turn your doubts into belief. And you will begin to exercise Christ’s authority over the powers of darkness as never before.

#### **D. Jesus wants to turn our spiritual failures into spiritual successes**

Not only does Jesus want to turn spectators into participants. And not only does He want to turn our biblical doctrine into spiritual power. And not only does He want to turn our doubts into belief. But He also wants to turn our spiritual failures into spiritual successes.

We hear of the disciples’ failure in the father’s words to Jesus: “*I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.*”

These words translated “but they could not” literally mean “*they were not strong enough.*” In other words, they lacked the power and authority to drive the demon out.

This failure is especially interesting in light of the fact that Jesus had already given them the authority to drive out evil spirits.

In Mark 6:6-7 we read that “*Calling the Twelve to him, he [Jesus] sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.*” And then we read: “*They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*”

Jesus had already given His disciples the authority to drive out evil spirits. And in the past they had successfully driven them out!

And the fact is, God has given *every* child of His Christ’s authority over Satan and all his demons. *Every* child of God bears Christ’s authority over the forces of darkness.

Do you know why every true child of God has *Christ’s* authority over Satan and his cohorts, who relentlessly try to tempt us and deceive us and accuse us?

Because of our position in Jesus Christ.

Do you know where the Lord Jesus is now?

The Bible says in Eph. 1:19-21...

**CHRIST IS SEATED IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS FAR ABOVE ALL RULE AND AUTHORITY, POWER AND DOMINION, AND EVERY TITLE THAT CAN BE**

GIVEN, NOT ONLY IN THIS PRESENT AGE BUT ALSO IN THE ONE TO COME! Satan, every demon, every power of this dark world, every spiritual force of evil is *way* under Jesus' feet. That's why they are totally subject to His authority!

And do you know where every believer is spiritually speaking?

Paul writes in Eph. 2:6...

You and I have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies far above Satan and all his forces of darkness.

In and of ourselves, we possess no authority over Satan and his demons. But if we are "in Christ", we have all the authority of Christ behind us. That same authority with which Jesus was able to drive out the demon in our story this morning is the same authority that's backing up every child of God.

It's like a policeman who is directing traffic. When a 180 pound policeman holds up his white-gloved hand, he is able to stop single-handedly many tons of metal (and plenty of plastic) driven by maniac drivers and hundreds of horsepower.

How can he do this?

Only because of the badge he wears. He has all the authority of the federal or state or local government behind him--backing him up. And everyone knows it and they obey!

Satan and his demonic forces must obey us because, as believers who are "in Christ", we have all the authority of Christ backing us up! We wear HIS badge. AND SATAN AND HIS DEMONS KNOW IT!

The disciples had been given Christ's authority over demonic spirits and yet when they tried to drive the demon out of this man's son, "they could not."

Why were they not able to do so now? Why did they suddenly find themselves lacking the authority that they once had over demons? What was the root cause of their failure (and our failure) to exercise authority over the forces of darkness?

When the disciples asked Jesus in private: "Why couldn't we drive it out?", Jesus answered: "*This kind comes out only by prayer*" and some manuscripts add "*and fasting.*"

Jesus was saying that authority needed to drive out demons comes through prayer and fasting.

But what does prayer and fasting have to do with gaining the authority they needed to drive out the demon?

Prayer and fasting are acts whereby we place *all* of us under Christ's authority.

Jesus modeled this kind of praying. When He was facing the cross, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*"

It's praying as Jesus taught us to pray: "*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

Jesus had spiritual authority because He was completely submitted to His Father.

The same is true for us.

Prayer is the act of placing all of me under Christ's authority. It's the process whereby I place every part of me under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Submission to another's authority isn't easy. It wasn't easy for Jesus' disciples. In fact, in the verses that follow this morning's text, we find the disciples arguing over who's going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. A little bit later we read in Mark 10 where James and John ask Jesus if they can sit on His right hand and left hand in His glory.

The disciples argued amongst themselves about who what going to have the greatest authority in the Kingdom!

This issue of submission was a struggle for them—and it’s a struggle for us as well. Human nature hasn’t changed a bit since their day, has it?

Submitting ourselves to someone else’s authority is a foreign concept to most of us today. We live in a culture where we are bombarded with the message: “You are your own authority.” In fact, in our culture, submitting to someone else’s authority is a sign of weakness.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “submission?” Weakness. Forced servitude. Limp-wristedness. No backbone. Doormat mentality.

In our culture, success is determined by how many people submit to *you*.

In the Kingdom of God, success is determined by how submitted you are to the Lord Jesus!

And the fact is, you cannot experience spiritual authority over strongholds and over Satan’s activity in your life and in the lives of others until every ounce of you has been placed under Christ’s authority.

It’s praying: “Lord, I place my hands, my mouth, my eyes, the thoughts and intents and motives of my heart under Your authority.”

I cannot expect to have spiritual authority over the forces of darkness while at the same time viewing with my eyes pornography on the internet. I cannot expect to have authority over demonic influences if I harbor in my heart a root of bitterness towards another person.

That’s why in James 4:7 we read, “*Submit yourselves, then, to God.*” And then James writes, “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*”

We cannot be “over” until we’ve “come under.” We cannot exercise Christ’s authority *over* the forces of darkness in our lives and the lives of others until we have placed ourselves by an act of our will completely and totally *under* the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual authority over the forces of darkness follows on the heels of complete submission to Christ’s authority. **TOTAL SUBMISSION TO CHRIST’S AUTHORITY IS THE ONLY ROAD TO SPIRITUAL POWER.** In the Kingdom of God, victory comes through submission! Victory over the powers of darkness comes through full submission to Christ’s authority.

This kind of complete submission to Christ’s authority comes on our knees before God in prayer.

**PRAYER CHANGES US SO THAT WE CAN RECEIVE WHAT GOD HAS FOR US.** Through the vehicle of prayer we come to the place where we are ready and able to exercise authority of the forces of darkness.

That’s why Satan trembles when he sees even the God’s *weakest* child upon his knees.

God wants to turn our spiritual failures into spiritual successes. He wants to turn our spiritual impotence into spiritual authority over the forces of darkness. But we must totally submit to Christ’s authority.

Is there some area of your life that is not yet fully yielded to Christ’s authority? If so, submit it to Christ through prayer—even fasting—because this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting!

### III. CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

Demons beckon to you, trying their best to deceive you, tempt you and accuse you. They are trying their level best to keep you in a state of spiritual defeat. And there are people all around you in desperate spiritual need. Many have given in to Satan's beck and call. Some even find themselves bound, enslaved and controlled by the powers of darkness.

This morning, God wants to take you "beyond the wardrobe" and into the fray. He wants to change you into a believer who is ready and prepared to exercise Christ's authority over the forces of darkness.

This morning God wants to change you into a believer who is ready and prepared to exercise Christ's authority over the powers of darkness in your life and in the lives of others around you.

What does God want or need to do in your life this morning for you to go "beyond the wardrobe" and into the spiritual battle?

Perhaps you find yourself on the bench or in the stands. This morning, God wants to turn you from being a mere spectator into an active participant in the spiritual battle.

Maybe you possess biblical knowledge but lack spiritual power. Today, God wants to turn your biblical knowledge and turn it into spiritual power.

Perhaps when it comes to experience victory over Satan and his evil schemes, you find yourself struggling with doubt. This morning God wants to turn your doubt into belief—belief that He is able to do the impossible.

Maybe you are tired of giving in to Satan's schemes. You've had it with spiritual failures. This morning God wants to begin to turn your spiritual failures into spiritual successes as you begin to yield every area of your life to Christ's control.

This morning open yourself up to His working.

If you allow Him to work in you in this way, you will experience victory over the influence of Satan in your own life and God will use you as never before to help others experience this same victory. And God will use you to pray down strongholds that have kept people captive to Satan here and in other countries for so long.

Today the "wardrobe" awaits you.

Will you step through it today?

Let's pray.

## Autistic player surprises everyone by being the star of the game

By Pat Justice

Autism is a brain disorder that often interferes with a person's ability to communicate with and relate to others. High school senior Jason McElwin player from Greece, New York suffers from the disease, but it has never stopped him from being a crucial part of his high school basketball team.

Greece, N.Y., is like any other town in the U.S., a nice place to live and a great environment to send your children to school. The McElwin family decided to send their son Jason to Greece Athena High School. Although Jason suffered from autism, it never stopped him from making friends and being an inspiration to the team. He stands a mere 5-foot-6, and the coach decided to include him in activities as the team trainer. He attends every practice, supplies water bottles and most importantly provides motivation for every player. The players treat Jason as one of their own, even calling him by the nickname J-Mac.

For the last home game of the year, the coach decided that for senior night he would let Jason dress and possibly check him into the game. When the game became out of reach, Athena was leading. The time for Jason to shine arrived.

With 4:19 on the clock, Jason nervously came off the bench when the coach called to him, and almost forgot to check in. He airballed his first three, and the coach wondered if he had made the wrong move. He didn't.

Jason went on to hit a three ... then another ... and then another.

"I ended my career on the right note," Jason said. "I was really hotter than a pistol."

Touching everyone in the crowd, Jason went on to score 20 points, the leading scorer for the game. In just over four minutes he hit six of 10 from 3-point range, exciting the crowd with each point he scored. Jason was carried off the court on the students' shoulders, feeling something that he never had before. For one night, Jason was the star of the game.