

Healing of the Epileptic Boy

Luke 9:38-43

“Mark’s account is much the fullest. Christ descends from the mount to resume his works of benevolence. He who had communed with God and his prophets in the very atmosphere of heaven, now mingles in the common life of men, and concerns himself with their troubles. He was full of grace as well as truth. Raphael brings this out in his great picture, which depicts the Transfiguration and the healing of the epileptic boy upon the same canvas” (Dummelow 684).

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

In Matthew, this Gospel writer calls the son a “*lunatic*, i.e. epileptic, because epileptics were supposed to be affected by the changes of the moon (*luna*)” (Dummelow 684).

“The physical manifestations were similar to those of epilepsy—a fact that has contributed to the unfortunate misunderstanding of epilepsy down through the ages. Luke alone notes the continual debilitating oppression the boy endured” (*EBC* 8.930).

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

Teareth is *rhegnumi* in Greek which means to rend; burst or break asunder; to distort, convulse, like a demon causing convulsions in a man possessed, as in cases of demon possession and epilepsy (Thayer 4486).

“The description the father gives of his son’s illness is graphic: he is possessed by a spirit, and this has caused a speech loss. He also has seizures accompanied by foaming at the mouth, grinding of the teeth, and bodily rigidity” (*EBC* 8.702).

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

The word *faithless* in Greek is *apistos* and means unfaithful, unbelieving, without trust in God (Thayer 57).

“In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus answers and says, ‘O faithless and perverse generation!’ Perverse means that which is twisted or turned from the proper direction; and is often used of the eyes, when one or both are turned from the natural position. Applied to a generation, or race of men, it means that they hold opinions turned or perverted from the truth, and that they were wicked in their conduct” (Barnes 80).

42 And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

See in Greek is *eido* which means to perceive with the eyes; to discern; discover; to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything; to get knowledge of, understand (Thayer 1492).

“Confronted by Jesus, the demon immediately threw the boy into a convulsion and made him fall on the ground and foam at the mouth (v. 20)” (EBC 8.703).

43 (to .) And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

“Error is never a person; let us hold that thought clearly in mind. When Jesus healed the epileptic boy, he called that which was making the trouble, ‘Thou dumb and deaf spirit.’ Error is, indeed, both dumb and deaf. It cannot talk for itself, nor can it hear itself talk: hence it must get someone to do its talking, and someone to listen to its talking” (Wheatley 79).

“Sometimes Jesus called a disease by name, as when he said to the epileptic boy, ‘Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. It is added that ‘the spirit [error] cried, and rent him sore and came out of him, and he was as one dead,’ — clear evidence that the malady was not material” (S&H 398: 1-7).

This same story is in the book of Mark and includes the following verses not in this week’s Lesson.

Mark 9:28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

“Jesus told them in reply, that it was because of their unbelief that they had not been able to cast him out. They were appalled by the difficulty of the case, and the obstinacy of the disease” (Barnes 80).

[Mark 9:29](#) And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

“In the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we read that even the disciples of Jesus once failed mentally to cure by their faith and understanding a violent case of lunacy. And because of this Jesus rebuked them, saying: ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.’ When his disciples asked him why they could not heal that case, Jesus, the master Metaphysician, answered, ‘Because of your unbelief’ (lack of *faith*); and then continued: ‘If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove.’ Also he added: ‘This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting’ (refraining from admitting the claims of the senses)” (My. 221:32-14).

“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,’ but he did not appoint a fast. Merely to abstain from eating was not sufficient to meet his demand. The animus of his saying was: Silence appetites, passion, and all that wars against Spirit and spiritual power” (My. 339:24-29).

“In order to work miracles of this kind, to cast out devils in cases so obstinate and dreadful as this, faith of the highest kind is necessary. That faith is produced and kept vigorous only by much prayer, and by such abstinence as fits the mind for the highest exercises of religion and leaves it free to hold communion with God” (Barnes 80).

One way of thinking about the terms “prayer” and “fasting” is to use two words, “yes” and “no.” To pray is to say “yes” to thoughts from God, to affirm and acknowledge the truth that God is telling us, and to say “no” is to deny that which is not of God. A thorough Christian Science treatment includes both affirmation and denial.