

Faith as Critical Threshold
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From Mark 9:14-29. FAITH AS CRITICAL THRESHOLD, PART 1

#1. Jesus entered an *unfolding discussion* v. 14-15. Discussions are usually about some thing or some circumstance and about how it is to be represented, understood, comprehended and even resolved.

#2. Demon-possession was the focus v.17. The case was malignant, destructive, uncontrolled and with serious collateral effects v.17, 18.

#3. The Lord asked those present to declare themselves as part of the unfolding discussion. "What are you discussing with them?" v.16. They did.

#4. "I told Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do it", said the boy's father v.18. The situation was beyond human competence to resolve. Therefore, the only hope was God. Problem: God did not answer. The situation, apparently intractable, conduced to *doubts about God*. Hopelessness took root in their minds. *But hopelessness in the heart is not an explanation nor is it a resolution.*

#5. *Hopelessness in the face of intractable situation and circumstance is THE DEFAULT POSITION.* More than that; it is *the unnecessary position.*

#6. Jesus found the default position of mind tiresome. "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me!" v.18.

#7. *Hopelessness was the inherent product of unbelief.* Their unbelief. The Lord refocused the discussion immediately. The issue was that of faith in God above intractable human conditions. We face so many of those. Jesus was formidable in His language.

#8. Faith in the Lord and in His Word must grow and reach the point of a *critical threshold*. No such category of faith as that was functioning in this circumstance. What faith the people had could not overrule hopelessness.

Faith at the critical threshold makes "hopelessness" a meaningless term.

From Mark 9:14-29. FAITH AS CRITICAL THRESHOLD, PART 2

#1. The dark reality had imposed what appeared to be an intractable, hopeless circumstance upon this "boy" v.20. And therefore, upon the family. Such unnerving conditions were a possibility for every family.

#2. The father, *in extremis*, appealed to Jesus. "But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us" v.22. The sincere cry of an anguished parent and on behalf of a tortured son.

#3. The Lord's response was immediate and corrective. "And Jesus said to Him, 'If you can? All things are possible to him who believes'" v.23.

#4. The locus of the immediate issue was not the supposed relative power between God and that of the satanic dark reality. Rather the actual and true issue was their faith. The faith of the people in general was well below *the critical threshold* required by God.

#5. Faith is personal. Groups do not have faith. People do or do not have faith. In this case the individuals who lived there, held a form of belief insufficient to deal with demon possession.

#6. *Their anguish and fear was stronger than their faith in God.* Jesus must have shocked them by His reaction. This suffering could have been resolved long ago if these people had had faith at the critical threshold. But they did not. Their weakness of faith and doubts about God were being challenged by the presence of the dark reality.

#7. The father of the boy instantly laid hold of this truth. "Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, 'I do believe; help my unbelief'" v.24.

#8. The "disciples" v.18 themselves did not have faith at the critical threshold. They could do nothing. Faith as the critical threshold cannot be displaced by circumstance. Any circumstance.

From Mark 9:14-29. FAITH AS CRITICAL THRESHOLD, PART 3

#1. The Lord uttered a statement about *the nature of the eternal world* -- which had immediate implications for *the nature of the temporal world*. And it revealed that the two are *unalterably linked together*.

#2. This riveting pronouncement pours like scented oil over our temporal wounds. Jesus took aim at situations, circumstance, events and states of being--none of which we can escape.

#3. Moreover, the pronouncement was *true in the absolute*. It was true at the beginning of time. It had always been true. It was true before Jesus came into the world. It is true now. And the Lord said: "All things are possible to him who believes" v.23.

#4. Therefore *faith as the critical threshold* does not submit to time nor to temporal circumstance, whatever it may be.

#5. Faith in the Almighty and trust in what He can do is not constrained by the immediacy of any situation. Nor is it constrained by the gravity of the situation.

#6. *The Lord elevates unconstrained faith above our temporal conditions, needs and personal limitations.*

#7. Suddenly a certain logic appears. If faith in God and in the word of God, at the critical threshold surmounts and reverses demon possession, then it can surely deal with the natural world.

#8. The determining power index or link is not between human ability and temporal conditions. *The index of consequence* is between God and the believer. This is faith at the critical threshold.

From Mark 9:14-29. FAITH AS CRITICAL THRESHOLD, PART 4.

#1. Faith having reached the degree of intensity we call *critical threshold* has an expansive effect upon prayer. ""This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" v.29. A person's faith, demonstrated to be at the critical threshold, elevates prayer from ritual, the devotional and duty to the level of a *spiritual weapon against the dark reality and natural circumstance*.

#2. Prayer is a complex of things. One offers prayer to the God of creation. Prayer involves praise for the Eternal and concern for temporal conditions. And the one who prays must have faith.

#3. Surely the family of the afflicted boy had thought to pray. Apparently, the disciples had underestimated prayer v.18. So it seems, everyone involved had *under prayed*.

#4. Jesus was talking about *quickenning prayer*-- prayer that results in some manifestation of redemption from circumstance.

#5. The language manifold of this text is conclusory. Faith at the critical threshold must be allied with prayer to compose *a quickening effect*. An "unbelieving generation" v. 19 cannot achieve the phenomenon of quickening prayer. Prayers can, in fact, fail.

#6. Only God can command an "unclean spirit" v.25. Faith at the critical threshold and quickening prayer is our attempt to move the Almighty to redeem us from this world of sorrow and loss.

#7. Critical faith--> quickens prayer--> which quickens God to act on our behalf--> who quickens any human state of being with redemptive force.

#8. This explains prayer failure. "Why could we not drive it out"? v.28. "All things are possible to him who believes" v.23. No human personal situation is intractable. The boy's father came to see that in the midst of heartache and tragedy. "I do believe; help my unbelief" v.24.

From Mark 9:14-29. FAITH AS CRITICAL THRESHOLD, PART 5

#1. This case of demon possession could have been resolved much earlier if *the willful provision* had been present. That is, if the human minds represented in this text had adduced the need to continually grow in faith and thereby transcend dependence upon human reason and experience. They did not.

#2. That failure to achieve faith as the critical threshold constituted a spiritual void. The reason for this is singular. The persons in this text believed that the universe, the world and therefore discrete experiences were all inarguably *weighted by temporal mechanics and not by eternal spiritual realities*. That is the usual profile of *insufficient faith* v.19.

#3. Such a limited faith, leveraged by human experience and wisdom was proven incompetent to deal with the situation at hand v.17, 18.

#4. This proclivity toward insufficient faith began in Genesis 3. Belief in God and in the Bible, expressed at a critical threshold contradicts common sense and generalization from lived experience.

#5. In the present atmospherics of social progressivism revealed truth is routinely deprived of its predetermined influence on our reasoning and behavior.

#6. Once faith becomes discontinuous from the word of God then that belief structure is inherently insufficient relative to time and material conditions. Outcome? The world will eat us alive.