

FACE TO FACE WITH "THIS KIND"

*Howbeit **this kind** goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.* Matt. 17:21

I almost wish that Jesus had never spoken the words of [Matthew 17:21](#). I had much rather been left to see all trials, tests, and problems on a level playing field with the same spiritual prescription that invokes a cure. However, we are faced with having to acknowledge the fact that there can be huge distinctions in the spiritual solvability of our trials, problems, and tests. Jesus' words, difficult as they might be to hear, warn us that sometimes when "this kind" shows up on our doorstep, the ordinary will no longer prevail.

The disciples were, as we also are prone to be, frustrated that their regular motions for overcoming spirits were inadequate against "this kind." Jesus explains to them that there are certain situations, spiritually speaking, where the "normal" will not suffice against the abnormality of "this kind."

Just as Matthew instructs us that some spirits are more wicked than others, it also instructs us that dealing with them requires far more spiritual leverage than we are normally used to applying. When "this kind" arrives in our life, then our life goes through working out our salvation with fear and trembling as never before.

Somewhere and at some time, we will all meet "this kind."

Like the disciples, we wonder at our failure to overcome as in times past, with the same formula we are so used to applying and seeing results. Now, however, with "this kind," our energies seem to be powerless. The "everyday prayers" somehow fail to secure for us their past success with "this kind"—which is far from being just another one of our everyday problems.

"This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," Jesus tells His disciples when they inquire as to their lack of success. The meaning of this statement, I believe, goes beyond just a simple instruction to pray and fast.

The disciples, as we know, did pray, and equally, we are aware that they also practiced fasting—however, Jesus' instruction was to alert them to the fact that when "this kind" arrives, it calls for spiritual combinations, several things all at once in order to be victorious.

In the real world, the art of multitasking is merely several actions taking place in stuttering movements, for no one can do more than one thing at a time, at the exact same time; no, multitasking is really doing several things in hiccups—applying efforts to each task in a shared environment. Yet, Jesus instructs us that in the spiritual realm that, several things can indeed be done all at once—prayer and fasting being one such combination.

When “this kind” arrives in our lives, we soon learn its resistance to our normal piety, and we can either become despondent and frustrated by its resistance, or we can begin to sandwich spiritual ingredients into an ongoing work in our hearts and lives which can bring us victory.

We, because of these encounters, begin to realize that our Christian pursuit means much more than staggered applications of prayer, fasting, worship, praise, devotion, Word assimilation, etc., but can and should be an ongoing combination of all these things.

Having faced “this kind” on more than one occasion, as is common to us all, I am more than ever aware of the combined powers of the diverse ingredients of spirituality—the ability to combine them into a potent remedy for “this kind.”

If we live staggering our spiritual abilities, we find that we are lacking when life goes “abnormal” with the arrival of “this kind.”

Jesus was instructing His unsuccessful disciples to live not juggling their spiritual assets, having only one in hand at a time, but to clutch them all at once, thereby having a richer and fuller walk with Him—after all, the main thing is not victory over “this kind” but rather the relationship with Him—Who is able to give us the victory.

Time fails me to speak of our encounters with “this kind” in the death of a loved one, a cancer diagnosis, and a plethora of other situations, but when I look back down the road, I see that God allowed us to survive them all by preparing us to meet “this kind.”

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