

Mark 9:14-29 Demon Possessed Boy

Setting: To appreciate Mark 9:14ff we need to keep two things in mind. *First*, immediately before this Jesus, along with Peter, James and John has a glorious experience, on what we call the Mount of Transfiguration, when the full glory of Jesus was seen by the disciples who were with Him. They then came down off the mountain, undoubtedly talking the whole way down about the experience, only to discover that the rest of the disciples had made a mess of things.

Second, earlier Mark told us that Jesus sent His disciples out with authority to cast out demons. Read Mark 3:14-15. The disciples had gone out and done just that. Casting out demons was not something new to them but, suddenly, they were unable to do it.

Read Mark 9:15-16. If you read ahead you get the whole picture. The disciples had tried to heal a demon possessed boy and could not. The picture that Mark painted is that the Scribes were really giving it to the disciples. Mark doesn't give the dialogue but the wording he used implies it was something like this. "You claim that this Jesus is from God and that you are His followers but obviously you are not, you can't even heal a boy. You are frauds and so is Jesus."

The events of that day accurately reflect the reality of life. Jesus and some of His disciples were on the mountain experiencing, in a special way, the goodness and glory of God. Then they descend into the world of sin, criticism and real needs. Some might like to spend the week in church, in the fellowship of one another, but the truth is that we return to the world of challenges and problems.

Read Mark 9:17-18. A father brought his son and said he was possessed by a spirit which is another word for "demon." This will be the 4th and last time in Mark that we have the record of casting out demons. The description of the behavior of the boy is very similar to that of one with Epilepsy and those who want to down play Jesus and Satan and his demons say that all the boy had was Epilepsy and via the power of suggestion Jesus cured him. Mark painted a very different picture showing clearly it was demon possession.

Read Mark 9:19 which records the frustration of Jesus toward both the crowd in general and His disciples in particular. Jesus was reflecting on the lack of faith of the people in general, although certainly His disciples are included. "**Unbelieving generation**" was a phrase that reflected on society in general. The phrase "**how long shall I stay with you?**" reflects on Jesus being aware that shortly He will go to the Cross. Jesus was only a few months away from that.

Note the little phrase "**bring the boy to me.**" How often do we take our problems to anyone and try everything before we take them to Jesus? A recently seen bumper sticker asked, "Is Jesus is your spare tire or our steering wheel?" That is an important question.

Read Mark 9:20. Think about how the other demons Jesus encountered reacted to Him. They immediately acknowledged who He was and reacted in fear. This one defiantly caused the boy to

have a seizure. Perhaps that was part of the problem the disciples had. This demon was different. Sin and temptations are not always the same. Some temptations are stronger than others to resist. Power from God is essential to overcome any temptation.

Read Mark 9:21-22. Verse 23 is Jesus' response, **"If you can?"** We don't say that too often to God. We know He can. Our issue is always that of His willingness to do something within the framework of His perfect will. We believe He can. This man was not all that certain He could and we can't blame him. His disciples, who represented Him, had not been able to help this father. When we fail to show Jesus as He really is to a watching world the world doubts Him.

That points us to a truth that we must never forget. We represent Jesus just as His disciples did and when we fail to be what He wants us to be or do what He asks us to do, it reflects on Him. Our failures to be legitimately His disciples gives the world the opportunity to criticize Him. When we don't properly love those around us we are telling them that God does not love. When we don't care for them we are telling them that God does not care for them etc. We don't have to be perfect and, in our imperfections, we can acknowledge God's grace.

Jesus added to that response: **"Everything is possible for one who believes."** This is by far one of the most abused verses in the Bible. People take this out of context and then declare that one is not healed because one lacks faith. Too many believe that in some way faith controls God and if we have enough of it God has to act on our behalf. The reality is that faith can never take us where God's will has not already gone nor can it automatically override the sinful world in which we live. Real faith believes the promises of God and accepts the will of God. Faith accepts the truth that God can do anything but does not demand that He do something specific for us.

Putting faith in its proper perspective we need to note what follows. Read Mark 9:24. The greatness of that statement is found in its honesty and in the response of Jesus. The father pleads for help while recognizing that he is a doubter. The deeper our faith goes the more we realize how much deeper it should go and how much more we plead "help my unbelief."

Read Mark 9:25 which describes what happened next. Note what did not happen. Jesus did not say, "Sorry, your faith is inadequate, so I can't heal your son." Jesus did not say to the father, "Go home and read the Bible more and when your faith is stronger come back." Jesus accepted the man's small but real faith and healed his son. It is exciting to realize that God meets our small faith with His infinite grace and mercy.

Jesus ordered the demon to leave the boy, adding that he was never again to enter him. The healing would be complete and permanent.

This demon was particularly brazen. Still defiant Mark 9:26 reads, **"The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out."** He may have been defiant, but he had to obey. Ultimately every knee and every demon will bow in submission to Jesus. The issue for mankind

is when we will bow. Will we bow now and escape eternal judgment, or will we wait until it is too late to bow?

Mark went on to describe the immediate effects of the exorcism: Read Mark 9:26-27. Mark does not tell us that he was really dead but simply that he appeared that way. Back the story up a little and recall that the demon had apparently attempted on numerous occasions to kill the boy, only to have his father rescue him. The father had reported when he brought the boy to Jesus that the demon on various occasions tried to drag him into the fire or drown him. One wonders if his father thought that maybe his boy, whom he had done so much to spare from death, was now dead. Had the demon, as his final act before leaving the boy, actually accomplished his goal? We can't tell from the text. Read Mark 9:27. Even if the demon had succeeded in killing the boy, note what Jesus did. Many over the years have seen in this a picture of the resurrection and perhaps Mark did also because he used terminology used later in the account of the resurrection. Jesus died on the Cross for us and was buried. Satan was certain he had won but then on the 3rd day Jesus came forth from the grave. Satan is a defeated enemy whose final destiny is certain. Satan brought grief and death into the world, but Jesus brought life.

Read Mark 9:28. We cannot be sure what answer the disciples were looking for. They were probably concerned with the technique of driving out demons. In the ancient world it was all about the right words or formula for exorcism.

Read Mark 9:29. The father's problem was limited faith while the disciples' was lack of prayer. It appears that the disciples relied on their own ability. They had done it before, so it was no big problem. The truth is, however, that any spiritual ministry be it preaching or teaching kids, using a gift of music, meeting needs of others, or whatever, can never be done in our own strength. We must never become so complacent in serving in Jesus' Name that we take it for granted. Failure will follow. We must bathe every act of ministry or service in prayer.