

## JESUS HEALS A BOY WITH AN EVIL SPIRIT

Mark 9:14-32

Key Verse: 9:23b

"Everything is possible for him who believes."

Jesus was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. This was Jesus' original image as God. This was a preview of Jesus' glorious resurrection body. This was Jesus' glorious image, in which he will come again to this world as King of kings to bring us back to his glorious and eternal kingdom. Jesus showed us a glorious image of himself as God so that we may imprint on our hearts his glorious image, and at the same time, erase all the evil images in us. In today's passage, 9:14-32, Jesus heals a boy with an evil spirit. It is a baffling event. Nevertheless, we learn what grieves Jesus most, and what Jesus wants us to have most.

I. The root problem is unbelief (14-19)

**First**, unbelief of Jesus' disciples and the teachers of the law (14-18). Jesus and his three top disciples--Peter, James and John--came down from the Transfiguration Mount to the foot of the mountain, the place of rendezvous, to join the other nine disciples who were waiting for them at the foot of the mount. The holy quietness Jesus and the other disciples had on the mount was disturbed by a commotion. A large crowd of people were watching an argument between the nine disciples and some teachers of the law (14,15). The argument started when the nine disciples could not heal a boy with an evil spirit with their experience, which they had had during the time of the evangelistic journey (Lk 9:10; Lk 10:17). The teachers of the law teased the nine disciples, mimicking the pose and gestures by which they had tried to drive out the evil spirit from the boy but could not. The teachers of the law

must have said, "No way: You are country comedians." The crowd of people were happy to see Jesus in the hope that he would heal the boy possessed by the evil spirit. More than that, they were happy to see Jesus because he looked as glorious as God right after coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Look at verse 16. "What are you arguing with them about?' he asked." Yet his disciples were only looking at each other, and no one dared to answer him. But a man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not" (17,18). The boy with an evil spirit was suffering beyond measure. But the nine disciples could not heal him. The teachers of the law could not heal him, either. They could not heal him because they had no faith in God.

**Second**, "O, unbelieving generation..." (19). What did Jesus say to him? Jesus did not answer him directly, but lamented in verse 19, saying, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." "O unbelieving generation," said Jesus to the people of the times, the people born and living at that time, including his nine disciples. The general atmosphere of those times was filled with unbelief. The people of that generation were godless and they were all men and women of unbelief. As a result, they became very fearful and fatalistic. The boy who was in constant torment was the exact description of the times. The hypocrisy of the teachers of the law was the symbol of the unbelieving generation. The teachers of the law were the leaders of the people. But they were only plagued by fear and insecurity because of their unbelief. They had no room in their hearts for God's sheep under their care. The nine disciples who had tried to heal the boy with an evil spirit had no faith in God to ask God's mercy to heal the boy with an evil spirit. Their faith was in their heads, not in their hearts. The nine disciples were in the realm of the unbelieving

generation.

In verse 19, Jesus said, "O unbelieving generation." When Jesus said this, it was a moment when Jesus was most painful. What did Jesus mean when he said, "O unbelieving generation"? It means that the whole world is in an unbelieving atmosphere or under unbelieving circumstances. For example, in the past there were several Bible-believing universities around the world. They had once been called the cult of Jesuit society because they were Bible-believing people. These days these kinds of universities allow homosexual and lesbian groups, Hindu and Muslim groups, Bahai and Buddhism to affiliate with the university as official groups. But university authorities, who are a xerox copy of the modern Pharisees, reject Bible-believing Christian groups for affiliation with the university, simply because they are terribly afraid of ungodly high profiles in the unbelieving generation. Because of this phenomenon, many unbelieving groups have been active to make the university atmosphere all the more unbelieving. Jesus grieves most when he sees the unbelieving generation of the present time. Jesus grieves, saying, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (19)

**Third**, the boy was a victim of the unbelief of the times. The boy in this passage seems to be a teenager. His life should have been beautiful, poetic, and a little rebellious to build up his own humanity. But it was not. He was only doing many things to destroy himself at any time (22), not because he was bad, but because of demon possession.

How did Jesus see this boy's problem? To Jesus, the boy's real problem was the unbelief of that generation. Because all people of the times did not believe in God, Satan was in command in that generation. Unbelief permeated all the ranks of intellectuality, all strata of society and all the echelons of culture. Unbelief smeared into the hearts of all people, even into

the heart of a teenage boy, and made them all very sick spiritually. Originally, man is a symbol of power and wisdom after the image of God. But unbelief made men very evil and fearful. Originally, women are the symbol of purity and faithfulness. But unbelief made them terribly insecure and immoral. The generation was in a spiritual quandary. People of the times were mental derelicts and flotsam of unbelief. Because of unbelief, the outcry of evil spirits and stomplings of the devil were most vociferous. In this unbelieving situation, people were perishing under the power of sin and death. Life without God seems to offer man unlimited human freedom. But it does not. Innumerable people from other countries have a dream to come to America and fulfill the American dream. They are greatly mistaken. These days TV most frequently broadcasts so many events of murder day after day. Someone said, "I have never heard anything that gives me a beam of hope on the TV." This might be the most adequate description of "unbelieving generation." When we believe in God Jesus is our Father and helps us to sing, "Our Father who art in heaven...." If we do not believe in God the devil is our stepfather who only gives us mashed potatoes and makes us endlessly sorrowful. This is the reason Jesus grieved over the unbelieving generation in which teens are liable to be possessed by the evil spirit. We cannot say that this generation is a Bible-believing generation. This generation seems to be one of the unbelieving generations. In this unbelieving generation, one person's Bible-believing faith is more significant than any other thing in the world.

## II. Jesus heals the boy with an evil spirit (20-27)

**First**, Jesus first heals the father's unbelief (20-24). In this situation, what did Jesus do? It was the very time for Jesus to pay close attention to the boy. But he did not. Instead, Jesus paid attention to the boy's father. Jesus began to heal the father's unbelief first. It is important for us to think about why Jesus heals the father's unbelief first. As soon as the boy was brought

to Jesus, the evil spirit realized that it was in danger of losing the boy. So, as a last resort, it threw the boy into a convulsion. Then the boy fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth (20). Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered (21). The boy's father explained how terrible the boy's life had been; he often attempted to kill himself (22). When the father asked the disciples to heal him, they could not. The boy's father had enough reasons not to believe, but to fall into unbelief. This is the father's problem as well as the problem of unbelieving people. Unbelieving people have enough reasons not to believe. This is the crucial mistake of ungodly men. Faith must overcome sinful human reason. There is a saying, "He is just like his father." Likewise, the boy with an evil spirit lived like his father and became just like his father. He became a demon-possessed young man. He was under the power of sin and death. Now the boy was dying. His father said to Jesus in verse 22b, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." He had no faith that Jesus would heal the boy. The father had half faith. Half faith is not faith at all. Look at verse 23a. "'If you can?'" said Jesus." Jesus rebuked him for begging human pity and sympathy. The father was the last person who could have faith in God. But Jesus decided to plant faith in God in him by saying, "Everything is possible for him who believes" (23). Here we learn that fathers and mothers should be Bible-believing people so they may give their children a spiritual heritage, not demon possession.

**Second**, the boy's father repented his sin of unbelief (24). How did the boy's father respond? When Jesus said to him, "Everything is possible for him who believes," immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (24b). This man sincerely repented his unbelief, crying out, "Help me overcome my unbelief!" From the father we learn how to overcome our unbelief. One summer, a servant of God gnashed his teeth until he got a toothache and a stinging migraine headache in order to bear with his sheep's misconduct. In the course of living in this world we confront

from time to time unbearable trial. Most people do their best to solve their critical problems and finally fall into fatalism and unbelief. But we must come to Jesus. Then Jesus will say to us, "Everything is possible for him who believes." This is the true way of repentance.

**Third**, next Jesus heals the boy (23). The boy's condition was critical, and no one could heal him from demon possession, so the father was fearful and sorrowful to watch his sick son. What did Jesus do? Look at verses 25-27. "When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.' The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, 'He's dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up." In this way, Jesus healed the boy with an evil spirit.

The evil spirit in the boy pretended to be mute and deaf. So it should not have been able to listen when Jesus rebuked it. But it could hear what Jesus said and took immediate action. The evil spirit, Satan's agent, is a liar and murderer. John 8:44 says, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." In the spiritual world there are two kinds of spirits. One is the Holy Spirit, the other the evil spirit.

### III. Prayer is the potent weapon for Christians (28-32)

**First**, the power of prayer (28-29). After this, Jesus went into a house. His disciples came and asked him a private question. "Why weren't we able to cast the demon out?" Evidently, the disciples were humiliated by the teachers of the law when they were not able to cast an evil spirit out of the boy

before them. Moreover, they were amazed by Jesus' power and authority over the evil spirit. His disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

Jesus answered them, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (29). Jesus says here that they could not drive the evil spirit out of the boy because they did not pray. What, then, is prayer? Prayer is the expression of our faith. 1 John 5:14,15 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him." As much as we believe in God Almighty, we can pray. The third and fourth century Christians believed that the corrupted Christian churches would be destroyed together with the corrupted Roman Empire. But St. Augustine believed that Christian churches would prosper as long as there were Bible-believing Christians. Bible-believing Christians scattered and established Bible houses. The ancient Bible houses were called the Augustinian monastery, the Franciscan monastery, the Dominican monastery and so on. They prayed in the early morning from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. They ate one meal a day and worked all day long. At night they taught the Bible. In this way, the Christian churches were maintained.

**Second**, Jesus teaches his disciples concerning his death and resurrection (30-32). Look at verse 31b. "He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.'" After Jesus healed the boy, he took his disciples to a secret place. There, he began to teach them again the meaning of his death and resurrection.

In this passage we learn that we must not fight with brothers and sisters, but engage in the spiritual battle against the unbelief in our hearts.