

信心的功课——马可福音 9:14-29

The Lesson on Faith—Mark 9:14-29

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 9:14-29; James 1:5-8; 5:16-18

Mark 9:14-29

14 When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them. **15** Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and *began* running up to greet Him. **16** And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” **17** And one of the crowd answered Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; **18** and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*.” **19** And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!” **20** They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around and foaming *at the mouth*. **21** And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. **22** It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” **23** And Jesus said to him, “‘If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.” **24** Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” **25** When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.” **26** After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and *the boy* became so much like a corpse that most *of them* said, “He is dead!” **27** But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. **28** When He came into *the house*, His disciples *began* questioning Him privately, “Why could we not drive it out?” **29** And He said to them, “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.”

- One of the most important characteristics of faith is that it is not by sight. It does not wait to believe until it can see, but it believes in things which eyes cannot see.

2 Corinthians 5:7: "for we walk by faith, **not by sight**—"

Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of **things not seen.**"

John 20:29: "Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'"

1 Peter 1:8: "and though **you have not seen Him, you love Him**, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,"

- In Mark 9, Jesus had already begun his journey to Jerusalem, and his time with the disciples was running short. For over two years, the disciples had followed Jesus by sight; but now, they must learn to follow Him by faith. However, their faith was still very weak. So, Jesus arranged a lesson for them to learn that they can access His divine power by faith.
- outline
 - The Lesson on Faith
 1. The Test of Faith (vv.14-18)
 2. The Rebuke of Faithlessness (v.19)
 3. The Compassion of Faith (vv.20-22)
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The Test of Faith (vv.14-18)

- "When they came back to the disciples": After the transfiguration, Jesus came down from the mountain with the three disciples to return to the nine disciples waiting at the foot of the mountain. Jesus had intentionally left them there to test their faith, to see how they would handle practical matters by faith in his absence. The result was clearly less than ideal.
- "they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them.": The topic of the argument was evidently the disciples' failure to cast out demon. They finally found an opportunity to attack Jesus!
- "I brought You my son": He came for Jesus but He was gone, so he only saw the nine disciples. By this time, the disciples had become quite "experienced" in casting out demons (Mark 6:7, 12-13). Surely they would've said with confidence, "No problem! Let us handle this. In Jesus' name, I command you, come out of him!" And nothing happened...

【Principle】 Experience is unreliable! You can't rely on experience alone to serve God.

When you overly rely on your experience and begin to put your faith in it, God will arrange circumstances to correct your faith.

- "And He asked them": The question was directed at the disciples, but they remained silent, embarrassed to admit their failure. It was the father of the child who stepped forward to tell the truth. He started with a prayer of faith: "Have mercy on my son" (Matthew 17:15).

- “possessed with a spirit which makes him mute”: This spirit didn’t just make him mute. Luke's account says it also made him scream. Verse 18 indicates that this was an extremely vicious spirit, producing symptoms similar to epileptic seizures.

The Rebuke of Faithlessness (v.19)

- "O unbelieving generation": Religious leaders and the crowds were of course part of the unbelieving generation, for they didn’t believe Jesus at all. The boy’s father also later admitted his unbelief. However, these words are primarily directed at the disciples! Jesus said it in response to the disciples' failure to cast out the demon. While the people in general had no faith in Jesus, it was the disciples' unbelief that saddened Him the most.

【Clarification】 : This doesn't mean the disciples lacked basic saving faith; rather, it means what they showed in this particular matter is not of saving faith, but the kind of unbelief that defines the whole world. Not only is salvation by faith, service is too. The point is: True Christians also commit the sin of unbelief all the time. Whenever we rely on our own experience and abilities to act instead of relying on God through prayer, we commit the sin of unbelief.

- “how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?” Jesus was being particularly urgent because his time on earth was running out. The cross was imminent, and the disciples must learn to serve by faith.

【Application】 How much time do we have to waste? How much time do we have to serve the Lord on earth? When will we learn to serve by faith? If we don't give ourselves to serving God diligently, we'll never learn to serve by faith.

The Compassion of Faith (vv. 20-22)

- "How long has this been happening to him?" This question was entirely out of Jesus' compassion, expressing genuine concern for the father. He gave him an opportunity to open up and tell the great suffering he had endured for years.
- “It has often destroy him.”: The devil's goal is to destroy his life, not just to torment him. The devil has been a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), whose favorite game is to kill people. The father undoubtedly tried numerous times to rescue his son from danger, but however much ability he had, he was no match for such a vicious demon. The only reason this child could survive till now is the supernatural protection of God. If God had not constantly and sovereignly restrained the power of the demon, the child would’ve died long ago.
- “But if You can do anything, take pity on us”: What do you mean "if you can"? Didn't he come to Jesus in faith believing that He can deliver him from suffering? Clearly, he became

confused by the disciples' failure and started even to doubt Jesus' ability. Earlier, the leper believed Jesus had the ability but was unsure if Jesus was willing (Mark 1:40); now, this father believed Jesus was willing but doubted his ability. There are so many ways for believers to commit the sin of unbelief. Having complete faith in Jesus is really not an easy task.

The Power of Faith (v.23)

- "If you can": Jesus is repeating his words, "If you can"? Are you kidding me!"
- "All things are possible to him who believes.": The issue isn't if I can; the issue is if you believe. If you do, all things are possible.

【Note】: Jesus didn't say "All things are possible to him who has great faith," but rather, "to him who believes." In Matthew's account, Jesus here used the mustard seed to illustrate the point: even the smallest faith can access great power that can move mountains.

【Insight】: The size of faith isn't the issue; the object of faith is. Put your faith in your own experience and strength, and you'll get none of Jesus' power. Put your faith in Jesus alone, and you'll get His power to accomplish His will for you.

【Note】: "Everything" doesn't include anything out of selfish desire. It refers to everything that God desires for you to do. If your faith is placed in Jesus alone, then you certainly won't seek your own desires but only God's will for you.

The Cry of Faith (v.24)

- "I do believe; help my unbelief." The first part is a confession of basic faith, while the second part confesses the sin of unbelief and cries out to Jesus for help. The father saw there was unbelief mixed in his faith, so he immediately admitted it and asked the Lord to help, making no excuse for himself. This kind of humble prayer is what faith looks like.

【Comparison】: This is exactly the lesson the disciples needed to learn! Their failure to cast out the demon was precisely due to a lack of this humble prayer!

The Assurance of Faith (vv.25-27)

- "He rebuked the unclean spirit": The sovereign power of Jesus is the only reliable assurance of faith.
- "throwing him into terrible convulsions": This was just the dying kicks of the demon.

- "most of them said, "He is dead!"": Again, we see the stubborn unbelief of the crowd. How could he possibly be dead? So Jesus protected him all these years, only to be defeated by a demon now? How could that even be possible?

The Lesson of Faith (vv.28-29)

- "His disciples began questioning Him privately.....": The key lesson the disciples must learn from this entire incident is summarized here at the end. No doubt, the disciples were quite surprised by their failure. They thought they'd mastered the skill of demon-casting, so they weren't expecting a failure.
- "..... but prayer.": Matthew's account states that the reason for the failure was "because of your little faith" (Matthew 17:20).

【Lesson】 The expression of true faith is prayer. The boy's father prayed with genuine faith and received help from the Lord, even though his faith was still small. The disciples did not receive help from the Lord precisely because they did not pray; and they did not pray because their faith was not even the size of a mustard seed. They were way too confident in their own abilities, so they didn't put their faith in the Lord, and thus neglected prayer.

James 4:2 "You do not have because you do not ask."

- Some early manuscripts have "and fasting". See Matthew 17:21. There are things you just cannot accomplish without prayer and fasting! Some stubborn sins cannot be conquered without prayer and fasting! Some difficult trials cannot be endured in a God-honoring way without prayer and fasting! Why do some repeatedly fail in the face of temptation? Have they tried prayer and fasting? Countless saints have testified to the importance of prayer and fasting for spiritual growth. In times of significant needs, not praying and fasting is an expression of unbelief.