

April 28st, 2019
Help My Unbelief
Mark 9:14-29

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 21 2 Kings 1-3	Apr 25 2 Kings 12-14
Apr 22 2 Kings 4-5	Apr 26 2 Kings 15-17
Apr 23 2 Kings 6-8	Apr 27 2 Kings 18-19
Apr 24 2 Kings 9-11	Apr 28 2 Kings 20-22

Lesson Introduction: *Our lesson this week focuses on Jesus' power and authority over the spiritual realm, and His grace towards us as we face the battle at hand. We will see that He not only overcomes the demonic powers that come against us, but also overcomes our unbelief by His sheer grace. As we study this short passage, may we be encouraged that Jesus gives us victory over Satan and his minions, and also gives us victory over our own doubts and disbelief.*

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **Our battle is not against flesh and blood (V. 17-18, 20-22, 25-29; Ephesians 6:12)**
- **It is by grace that we believe (22-25)**
- **Jesus has authority over the spiritual realm (V. 18-19, 23-29)**

Mark 9:14-29 English Standard Version

14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. 15 And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. 16 And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" 17 And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 18 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." 19 And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." 20 And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22

And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." 26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Discussion Section 1: The True Battle (V. 17-18, 20-22, 25-29)

- What is the significance of Jesus coming down from the mountain and immediately facing off against demonic forces?
- What caused the boy's physical ailments?
- What are some ways that we lose sight of where the true battle lies?

Note: *When we last saw Jesus, He was on the Mount of Transfiguration in the presence of Moses, Elijah, and His Father! What a moment of encouragement, albeit brief. As soon as Jesus and the three disciples make their way down from the mountain, they find themselves right in the middle of a spiritual battle. Just as Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after meeting with God, only to find God's people succumbing to their unbelief by turning to an idol (Exodus 32), so Jesus now comes down to see that His disciples are still not ready for the battle that is at hand. But Jesus did not retreat and try to go back up the mountain, instead, He stepped right in the middle of the conflict. He knew there was a battle to be fought that could not be avoided by spiritual highs.*

It is important as we begin studying this passage to embrace the reality that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). What we see

throughout this passage is that there is a demon which possesses this young boy, to the point that even the boy's physical ailments are attributed to it. In his book **The Screwtape Letters**, C.S. Lewis stated that, "**There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils [demons]. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves [the demons] are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.**" Lewis was arguing here for a healthy understanding of demonic activity. As believers, it is vital that we understand that we face real attacks from enemy forces, and that our true battle is with them, while also keeping our eyes on Jesus, being infinitely more enamored with Him than the spiritual forces that we are at war with.

Discussion Section 2: Overcoming Unbelief (V. 14-29)

- Why is Jesus exasperated with the people in **V. 19**?
- What is the reason that the disciples were unable to cast out the demon?
- What was wrong with the way the man asked Jesus to heal his son? How might we relate?
- What does the man's cry of "**I believe; help my unbelief**" teach us about how faithlessness is overcome?
- How do we see the grace of Jesus in this passage?
- What is our hope in the battle against "**the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience**" (**Ephesians 2:2**)

Note: As we study this passage, it is vital that we see the unbelief being displayed by everyone involved besides Jesus. The first thing that we see is that the disciples and scribes were arguing (**V. 14**). The reason they were arguing had to do with the fact that Jesus' disciples were unable to cast out the spirit from the boy. The scribes were almost certainly mocking the 9 left at the foot of the mountain, gloating in the fact that they did not seem to have the power of their Leader. They hoped that Jesus and all those close to Him would fail. Rather than faithful, they were cynical.

We also see a lack of faith from the disciples in their inability to cast out the demon. In **verse 29**, Jesus says

that the reason they were unable to cast out the demon was due to the fact that it could only be dealt with through prayer. What this tells us is that the disciples did not pray before attempting to cast out this powerful demon! Rather than faithful, they were prideful.

And of course, we see a lack of faith from the boy's father. He was a desperate man, deeply concerned for his son, and out of options as to how to help the boy. In a last-ditch effort, he brings the boy to Jesus, only to look around and realize that Jesus is not with His disciples, but up on some distant mountain. When Jesus does finally show up, all the man can muster up is a flawed statement about the power of Jesus; "**if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.**" Rather than faithful, he was doubtful.

In response to all this cynicism, pride, and doubtfulness, Jesus proclaimed, "**O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?**" Jesus was the answer to their problems, the One with the power over the demonic power at work before them, and yet, they could not see it. Jesus not only confronts the disbelief of the scribes and His disciples, but also the unbelief of the boy's father. Jesus' confrontation of the man's doubt in **V. 23** might seem a bit harsh to us, but in reality, was an act of pure grace.

Unbelief is the natural condition of our hearts. When left to ourselves, we all wander, all go our own way, and all doubt that God knows what is best (**Romans 3:9-14, Ephesians 2:1-3**). We see in our passage this week that it was not until Jesus confronted the man's unbelief that the man could truly trust Him. When confronted, the man recognized that He did not have it in Him to have the faith necessary, but that Jesus would graciously give more, and indeed He did!

When we struggle with faithlessness, the answer is not to simply try harder by our own efforts to believe. Our own efforts will never produce faith, for faith is a gift of God (**Ephesians 2:6-9, 1 Corinthians 12:3, Ezekiel 36:26-31**). The answer then, is God' grace! As we face doubts, may we be quick to cry out "**help my unbelief**" to the only One Who can produce faith. As Christians, we should regularly ask God to give us the faith required for each day. What an incredible truth it is that the One Who we are called to place our faith in for hope and salvation is the very One Who supplies the faith necessary for hope and salvation! What a great, unfathomable, gracious God we serve! Praise His name!