

“Instruction on Faith”
Mark 9:14-27
(Preached at Trinity, August 1, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. While Jesus was upon the mountain with Peter, James, and John the other disciples were not idle. A large crowd had gathered around them and the Scribes were in hot dispute with them over the demon possession of a man’s son.
A man had brought to them his precious son to be delivered from a demon and they had been unable.
 2. This account is found in all three synoptics – Mark has the fullest account giving us the most detail.
 3. As the crowd came running up to Jesus He immediately took control of the scene. He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" It is the same word we saw in **Verse 10** (συζητέω). It means far more than “discussing.” It means to argue or dispute. We find Jesus once again in teaching mode. He was always teaching. This, by the way, is one of the marks of a man called to the ministry. He has a heart to teach. He is always in teaching mode.
The intent of Jesus in this passage is to teach His disciples about faith and this will be the focus of my sermon tonight.
- I. The first thing brought to our attention is the condition of the boy
 - A. In **Verses 17-18** the father describes his son’s condition
 1. His symptoms were similar to epilepsy
"he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. "
 2. Matthews Gospel gave further description:
Matthew 17:15 NAU - "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water."
 3. He had convulsions which often threw him into the water or into the fire
 - B. The text makes it clear that his afflictions were not simply a physical malady; not something that someone could prescribe medicine to cure. It had supernatural causes. It was the result of being demon possessed.
 1. We need to be clear in our understanding of demon possession
The Bible never implies that all sicknesses are the result of Satanic action
There is a clear distinction
Matthew 4:24 NAU - "The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them."
 2. Demons are the fallen angels that dwell under the dominion of Satan.
 - a. In the NT we find them with the ability enter into human beings affecting their minds and their bodies.

- b. Demon possession could involve one or multiple satanic beings. They were able to speak through the mouth of the individual and answer when addressed.
- c. The Bible tells us several things about demons
 - They are agents of Satan,
 - They are personal beings – intelligence, emotion, they have a will
 - They are powerful and morally depraved
- 3. Demons were under the sovereign dominion of Christ. His great power over the demons served as evidence of Satan’s defeat in fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace.

- II. Second, we find the inability of the disciples to cast the demons out of the man’s son
 - A. Jesus had previously sent His disciples forth with the power to cast out demons

Matthew 10:1 NAU - "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness."

 - 1. They had previously been using this power

Mark 6:12-13 NAU - " They went out and preached that *men* should repent. ¹³ And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them."
 - 2. When Jesus had sent forth the 70 disciples they came back amazed of their authority over the demons

Luke 10:17 NAU - "The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."
 - 3. This time, however, they were unable to heal the boy – **See Verse 18**

Mark 9:18 NAU - "I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*."
 - B. The rebuke of Jesus – **Verse 19**

"O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?"

 - 1. This is a great contrast to the glory of the transfiguration – from the perfection of Christ to the sinful imperfection of men.

“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”

"O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?"
 - 2. His rebuke was at their unbelief - ἄπιστος
 - C. Jesus’ indignation was to all of those present –

"O unbelieving generation"

 - 1. Indignation towards the scribes who were probably gloating over the failure of the disciples instead of showing pity upon this man and his son

Mark 9:14 NAU - "When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them." (συζητέω)
 - 2. Indignation towards the father of the boy who lacked faith in the power of Christ

Mark 9:22 NAU - " But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"

3. Especially towards His own disciples
 - a. They had witnessed the power of Christ first hand
 - b. He had taught them personally and yet they still did not comprehend the nature of His work

Mark 9:10 NAU - "They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant."

Mark 9:19 NAU - "how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!"
 - c. They had received the most light

Matthew 13:11 – "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

Luke 12:48 – ". . . For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

C. Jesus demonstrates the disappointment of His humanity and the indignation of His deity.

1. He had been with the disciples for three years and His time on earth was coming to an end. **Verse 19** - "How long shall I put up with you?"
2. This points to the great mercy of God toward sinners. He should not put up with us for a single moment.
3. In His compassion and mercy He adds, "Bring him to me!"
4. What an example to us! In spite of His indignation and disappointment He still responded with compassion
5. God has been infinitely compassionate to us

Romans 5:8 NAU - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

III. Jesus then teaches some important truths about faith

A. Faith is believing that Christ is able

1. The father expresses doubt as to Christ's ability – **Verse 22**

"But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"

 - a. He uses the word δύναμαι – "If you are able to do anything"
 - b. Faithlessness presumes some serious negative things about God

Either He doesn't know, or He doesn't care, or He isn't able

Notice with the man's unbelief is doubt of Christ's compassion.

"if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"
 - c. Why wouldn't someone embrace Christ and the Gospel?

Either His Word is untrue or He is unable or He is unmerciful
2. Notice Christ's immediate response to the man's unbelief
 - a. First He asks a rhetorical question of correction

"If You can?" (Note capital "Y")

It is as if He is saying, "What do you mean IF?"

The KJV inserts the word "believe" which changes the whole meaning of Christ's question to the man. It puts the word "you" as referring to the man instead of to Christ.

- b. He follows this with,
"All things are possible to him who believes."
 - c. The man said, "if You can do anything
Jesus' answer: "All things are possible to him who believes."
In other words He is saying, "I can do EVERYTHING"
 - 3. Jesus immediately demonstrated His infinite power and authority
Mark 9:25 NAU - "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.""
- : C. Jesus is patient with our weak faith
- 1. The man immediately expressed faith and at the same time expressed his great weakness
Mark 9:24 NAU - " Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief.""
 - 2. This is testimony to our life. We believe and yet we cry out for aid. We are often filled with doubts and fears
Charles Bridge – "Oh, what a mighty deep of discouragements may the saints and people of God fall into, and yet be godly and gracious."
 - 3. And yet our fears are due to unbelief which is sin.
Jesus knows of the weakness of our faith and yet rebukes us for our unbelief.
Peter walking on the water:
Matthew 14:31 NAU - "Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"
Verse 19 - "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?"
 - 4. We serve a compassionate, merciful Savior
Matthew 12:20 KJV - "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."
To the sinner struggling with sin He doesn't leave them without hope. It doesn't take a strong faith. You have doubts, fears. You lack in confidence. Christ receives those with weak faith. He turns away those with no faith.

IV. Jesus' particular teaching on faith to His disciples

A. This was a private teaching.

Mark 9:28 NAU - " When He came into *the* house, His disciples *began* questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?"

1. Instruction on faith does not apply to those who do not possess it. A man must possess saving faith before he will comprehend spiritual teaching.
2. Their question was why they were not able to cast out this demon

B. Reasons for their failure –

1. **Verses 18-19** - because of their unbelief

Mark 9:18-19 NAU - "I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*." ¹⁹ And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation,"

Matthew's Gospel makes it clearer

Matthew 17:19-20 NAU - "Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" ²⁰ And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

2. Their lack of trust in the power of God left them without power
James 1:6-7 NAU - "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,"
3. Their lack of faith led to lack of prayer
Mark 9:29 NAU - "And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."
 - a. When we do not believe we do not pray. We do not pray because we don't believe our prayers are effectual
 - b. "This kind" implying that there are some situations in life where prayer is absolutely essential.
 - c. The KJV adds the word "fasting"
Fasting is important but was probably added to this text by a scribe in a later manuscript
4. Faith demands an eternal redemptive perspective
 - a. Notice our Lord's continued teaching to His disciples in **Ver 31-32**
 - b. Christ came into this age with one purpose in mind – He came to fulfill the eternal Covenant of Redemption.
 - c. Faith demands looking to this world, our life, all of history in the framework of God's redemptive plan.
Do you pray to this end? "Thy Kingdom Come!"
Everything in your life is designed by God according to purpose. Faith with this focus seeks first the Kingdom. It seeks first His righteousness and His glory.

- d. Jesus taught this in the case of a certain blind man
John 9:1-3 NAU - "As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "*It was neither that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him."
- e. Most people go selfishly through life with an eye to themselves. The redeemed must die to themselves. Only then can they truly understand the nature of faith. Only then can we properly understand the words,
Luke 22:42 NAU - "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."