

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Exorcising A Young Boy (Part One)

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Jesus walked with His disciples from Bethsaida to the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi. Six to eight days later, Jesus went up into a high mountain to pray, taking Peter, James, and John with Him and leaving His other nine disciples behind. There He was transfigured before the three. Meanwhile in the valley, the nine disciples failed to cast out a demon from a young boy. Descending the day following His transfiguration, Christ healed the demoniac boy. This miracle is recorded in three accounts: Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.

The failure of the nine disciples had given the scribes fuel for criticism of both the disciples and Christ. When Christ arrived on the scene, the scribes were being critically disruptive about the failure. The scribes were not known for their questioning as much as for their refuting and disputing. "Questioning" (KJV) or "disputing" (NKJV) in Mark 9:14 is translated from a Greek word that implies confuting, that is, attempting to disprove or deny.

The success of Christ, however, countered the failure of the disciples, shutting the mouths of the critical scribes. His coming upon this scene of dispute, chaos, and darkness must have been an incredible contrast to the honor, power, and glory that He had just experienced on the mountain in the Transfiguration. The sights and sounds that met Him on His return to the sinful world must have disturbed Him.

1. Why are the disciples surprised at being unable to cast out the demon?

Comment: The disciples' question, "Why could we not cast it out?" suggests that they could not see any reason for their failure. Jesus replies emphatically, "Because of your unbelief. . . . [T]his kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17: 20-21). Here He emphasizes the necessity and power of *faith*, as well as the need of intercession and self-denial. Their great lack of faith was not a lack of intellectual acceptance of all Christ stood for, but the lack of living faith in His divine omnipotence. He taught with excellence and performed many miracles, yet His teaching and miracle-working made little progress in the people's faith. Unbelief still dominated them (Romans 3:3-4). However, Christ continued in patience to teach the people and to work mighty miracles for them. Thankfully, our Savior is patient in dealing with our sluggishness and dullness in learning God's truth and faithfully living His way of life.

2. What overcomes the cause of the boy's affliction?

Comment: The gospels record the boy's horrible symptoms: severe convulsions, foaming at the mouth, grinding of the teeth, and general rigidity of body. Due to sudden attacks, he often fell into the fire and into the water. Another overwhelming symptom was deafness and dumbness. He could utter only inarticulate sounds, though he

possessed all the necessary organs for speech. All of his problems came as the result of his miserable, possessed condition, and they left him so emaciated that all life seemed to be draining from him.

Yet, nothing is too hard for Jesus Christ to conquer, no matter how powerful a demon seems to be. After rebuking the faithless and perverse generation, including the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus rebukes the demon, and it departs from him (Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:20, 25-27; Luke 9:42; see Zechariah 3:2). The demon dares not disobey Jesus' order not to re-enter because it recognizes His authority over it. From then on, the boy is free of the demon. Jesus takes the boy's hand and delivers him to his father, bringing calmness, peace, and order in place of the disruption that preceded the exorcism. His spiritual power to heal had overcome the demonic force that caused the boy to suffer.

3. What is the main lesson of Christ's miracle?

Comment: This miracle teaches that *it takes the power of faith to overcome the enemy* (Matthew 17:20; Mark 9:19, 23-24). Why had the nine disciples failed? They had been careless in their personal spiritual walks and had neglected prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). The authority that Jesus had given them was effective only if exercised by faith, but faith must be cultivated through spiritual discipline and devotion. The apostle Paul uses Abraham as an example of this:

No unbelief *or* distrust made him waver (doubtingly question) concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong *and* was empowered by faith as he gave praise *and* glory to God, fully satisfied *and* assured that God was able *and* mighty to keep His word *and* to do what He had promised. That is why his faith was credited to him as righteousness (right standing with God).
(Romans 4:20-22, *The Amplified Bible*)

Half of the healings Christ performed happened due to the prayer of loved ones and friends. The father of the demon-possessed boy remains a monument of faith, timid yet true, through his love for his boy. His pleading, "Have compassion on us, and help us," was highly honored by Jesus. The key to the exercise of such faith is not its quantity, but the God to whom it is directed; therefore, even the smallest faith—"like a mustard seed"—will see spectacular results (Luke 17:5-6; Matthew 17:20). Jesus says in Mark 9:23, "All things are possible to him who believes." Faith acts as an open door into a relationship with God and as a shield that protects God's people when they are under spiritual attack.