

JESUS HEALS A BOY POSSESSED BY AN EVIL SPIRIT

Mark 9:14-29

Key Verse: 9:23

"`If you can'? said Jesus. `Everything is possible for him who believes.'"

It was really wonderful to see the real image of Jesus on the transfiguration mountain. He was transfigured dazzling white and no one could look at him because holiness shone forth around him. We thank Jesus that he became a poor farmer whose clothes were rugged. He looked pathetic out of malnutrition and dehydration. But he revealed his original image as the Son of God. He also talked with suffering servants Moses and Elijah right before going up to Jerusalem to be crucified. May God bless you to have [the image of Jesus](#) in your heart. May God bless you that the image of Jesus may remain in your soul. Today's passage is a story about Jesus coming down from the transfiguration mountain and talking with his nine disciples, who were waiting for him at the foot of the mountain. The nine disciples left at the foot of the mountain were greatly embarrassed before the people for not healing a boy possessed by an evil spirit. Then Jesus appeared and healed the boy. Let's read the story more carefully.

I. The nine disciples at the foot of the mountain (14-18)

When Jesus went up the transfiguration mountain, he chose only three disciples, Peter, John and James to go with him. Nine disciples were at the foot of the mountain waiting for Jesus' coming back to them. Probably, they wanted to have a break while Jesus was on the transfiguration mountain. There Jesus revealed his original image as the Son of God. And he also received [counseling](#) from Moses and Elijah, for they were known as suffering servants.

After this, Jesus and his three disciples were coming down from the transfiguration mountain. Peter was amazed by the image of Jesus as the Son of God Almighty. Peter was also amazed by his own fantasy world which was too unrealistic. His face flushed when he remembered his words, "One shelter for Moses; one shelter for Elijah; and one for you, my Lord!" It was a momentary fantasy. But he remembered this fantasy. Later, he also remembered Jesus who was transfigured as the holy Son of God (2Pe 1:18). He always kept this image of Jesus in his heart and he was happy, and he could also be a courageous servant of God.

As soon as Jesus came back to the real world, there was a quarrel between his nine disciples and a crowd of people. This happened when a man in the crowd brought his son who was possessed by an evil spirit and asked the nine disciples to heal his son. Actually, the nine disciples were tediously waiting for Jesus' return from the transfiguration mountain. The nine disciples, however, were very sure that they could drive out the evil spirit from the father's son. It was because they had had an experience of driving out evil spirits during their fieldwork [training](#) time; not only one time, but during two fieldwork training times. One of them said, "Sure, we can heal your son. Don't worry." Another disciple said, "Oh, never mind. You just sit down and watch me heal him." Among the nine disciples, there was quite a commotion over who would heal the boy with the evil spirit. Finally, one of them was chosen to heal the boy. He

took a pose, like Bruce Lee making a Chinese kung-fu motion. Next he showed several hand gestures and once jumped high enough to surprise the audience. Then he shouted, "You evil spirit! Come out!" The evil spirit didn't come out. He didn't even budge. The disciple who made the Chinese kung-fu motion was a little bit embarrassed. He wanted to run away from the crowd. But he was surrounded by the crowd. He became helpless. There was a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law began arguing with them. The teachers of the law said, "Hey, you guys! You cannot cast out the evil spirit. Your teacher cannot cast out the evil spirit either. Your gesture was nice. But you could not cast out the evil spirit from the boy."

As soon as the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. It was because Jesus' holiness was still lingering in his features; Jesus looked awesome, indeed awesome. So they were overwhelmed and wondered. The crowd and the teachers of the law ran to Jesus and greeted him, "Hello, Jesus. It's a good day."

"What are you arguing with them about?" Jesus asked (16). A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech" (17). He went on, "You know, every morning my son said to me, 'Good morning, Daddy! I will see you Daddy when I come back from school.' He was the joy of my life and he is the mainstay of my family because he is the only son in my family. Suddenly, he was possessed by an evil spirit and he could not speak. What is more, when the evil spirit seizes him it throws him to the ground. Then he becomes flat like a wounded soldier. As soon as he restores his breathing, he foams at the mouth. It is indeed terrible to look at him. I cry, 'Oh, my son.' I complained to your nine disciples. They bragged about casting out an evil spirit. They only made motions and one of your disciples could not drive out the evil spirit from my son." To Jesus it was an embarrassing story. But he knew his disciples' spiritual condition. So he didn't say anything to them. Rather, he shook hands with all the nine one by one.

II. Unbelieving generation (19)

When Jesus saw his nine disciples who waited for him at the foot of the mountain, they looked as if they were still spiritually very low. At the same time, Jesus looked at the world. Look at verse 19. "'O unbelieving generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?'" Unbelieving people occupied the whole world. Men were unbelieving. Women were unbelieving. Men were evil out of their unbelief. Women were adulterous out of their unbelief. The world was perverse because people who lived in the world were all unbelieving. Whenever they spoke, first, a curse came out; they said whatever they wanted to say, like General Patton. Unbelieving hearts resulted in terrible sinsickness to the world. Because of unbelieving hearts, their sinful desire led them to sexual immorality with one another. Because of their unbelieving hearts, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever. Because of their unbelieving hearts, they became filled with every kind of wickedness and evil, greed and depravity. Because of their unbelieving hearts, they were full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. Because of their unbelieving hearts, they were gossips, slanderers and god-haters;

insolent, arrogant and boastful. Because of their unbelieving hearts, they disobeyed their parents; they were senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they knew God, they pretended not to know God. Because of their unbelieving hearts, they knew their evildoing deserved death, but they did not discontinue it (Ro 1:18-32).

Jesus groaned over the unbelieving generation. Here "generation" means people of the time. People of the time were all unbelieving; they were filled with evil spirits; they were possessed by many thousands of demons. They knew God, but they denied God. Finally they became godless people, like Lot's wife who did not listen to God's word and finally became a salt pillar (Gen 19:26).

Jesus saw all the tragedy and miseries and the overwhelming activities of evil spirits and demon possession which came from their unbelieving hearts. They were not sorrowful because they were occupied by the Roman Empire. They were really sorrowful people because they were unbelieving people. Jesus tried his best. Sometimes to five thousand men, sometimes to crowds of people thronging to him, Jesus tried to introduce the kingdom of God by speaking the word of God. Jesus healed so many sick people in order to let them appreciate God's love through his healing ministry. But still, the world didn't change at all. It was crowded by an unbelieving atmosphere.

His disciples followed him and saw how to perform miracles. Jesus prayed to God, upholding five loaves and two fish. He had a great compassion on his flock of God's sheep. Then God granted him many miracles. Jesus healed many blind men. Jesus healed many paralytics. Jesus once healed ten men with leprosy. But each time, Jesus prayed to God to heal them. Jesus always prayed to God, even early in the morning; he went to a solitary place and prayed (1:35). Jesus' ministry was preceded by prayer. But now Jesus was terribly discouraged by the unbelieving people. Jesus was also discouraged by his nine disciples who took a pose to heal the boy possessed by a spirit, but could not heal him. This is the reason Jesus groaned over the world and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" Here we must know that Jesus is most sorry when we belong to the unbelieving generation. God blessed America because there were many Puritans who loved Jesus with the motto, "In God we trust." If we go to Harvard University, we find that "In God we trust" is engraved on a tower. At first, Harvard University started as a Bible school. But now it has become a very secular university full of unbelieving hearts. In the past, many Harvard University students studied hard and Harvard always kept ranking number one out of hundreds of universities. But this year, Harvard University became the second place university, after Princeton University. It seems to be a small matter. But it is the sign that "In God we trust" is in second place. In this country, first place is occupied by money. And second place is also occupied by money-making effort. And third place is crowded by the people who want to make much money and live in this world forever. It is very sad that Harvard University lost the spirit of "In God we trust." May God restore Harvard University's "In God we trust" spirit. May God convert Harvard University to fulfill its original purpose as a Bible school. One of the Australian gold medal winners in swimming said, "America is strong because America has a Puritan foundation in history. But Australia has no foundation. So we are weak." That's right. America is strong

because we have a Puritan foundation. But we must restore it. Otherwise, we grieve Jesus, and hear him say, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?"

III. "'If you can'? Everything is possible for him who believes" (20-27)

Again people brought the boy who was possessed by an evil spirit. When the spirit saw Jesus, he immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. Then the boy fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth (20). It was indeed a pathetic event, even to think of.

Look at verse 21. "Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?' 'From childhood,' he answered." Jesus was grieving over the unbelieving people. In spite of this, he had a great compassion on this little boy who was possessed by an evil spirit. So he asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" Jesus said this to the boy's father with great compassion. The father answered, "From childhood. It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us" (22). His father felt like going into the fire to save him. His father saw that his son fell to the ground and was rolling around, foaming at the mouth. He felt as if he were 120 degrees insane. He felt life was a hell. So he begged Jesus. Look at verse 22. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." His father already despaired and had no hope of saving him from evil spirit possession. So he said, "If you can...."

Look at verse 23. "'If you can'? said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for him who believes.'" Until now, the boy's father had only hardship and misery and helplessness and hopelessness and he went around with an insane mind. He had no hope. He thought he had no help. So he spoke to Jesus with half-believing words. He did not say, "Save him from his evil spirit possession." But he said, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

At this moment, Jesus rebuked him. "'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." In this situation, Jesus taught the father absolute faith in God. In this situation, Jesus taught him that faith is the solution to all men's problems. We cannot see faith. So even though we come to worship service every Sunday, we don't care about increasing our faith. Many just habitually come, go back home and eat dinner, watch several movies on television and go to bed.

When we come to worship service, we must seek faith whole-heartedly. "Oh Lord! Give us faith in you, so that we can do everything when we believe in you." Here we learn from the boy's father that he was a man of half-faith. A man of half-faith looks good. He does everything decently and he pretends to be a child of God. He even serves God in many ways. There are not many people who have absolute faith. But there are some. For example, in Kwang Ju, Korea we prayed that God would make Korea a Bible Korea and world mission center. So we had a prayer topic, "Bible Korea and World Mission, Enlarge your tent!" And we did not doubt that God would make Korea a missionary-sending country. Students prayed for ten years. But nothing happened. There was no piece of cloud in the sky as a sign of Bible Korea and world mission. But now we see that God has enlarged the tent and missionaries have spread to 87 countries.

Many missionaries are suffering. There is no missionary who is not suffering. But they remain in the mission land with martyrdom spirit.

Many people want to devote themselves to God's work for the glory of God and for his happiness during the worship service time. But they soon forget what they thought about at the worship service and go back to suffer to watch something. If our faith is not absolute, but there is some alpha in our faith, God cannot use us. We become like the nine disciples who merely formed the gesture to heal the boy who was possessed by the evil spirit. We are nobody when we don't have absolute faith.

Look at verse 24. "Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'" This father suffered much and he was totally helpless. He had no way to go. At this moment, he listened to Jesus. Then he wrote a short testimony. Let's read verse 24 together. "Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.'"

The world seems to be many things, and many people are doing many things. But it is a battleground to defeat our unbelief. Those who are not fighting against unbelief will perish. But those who fight with courageous faith against unbelief will succeed. Finally he will receive the crown of life. Now we pray, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." When this prayer topic was given, no one responded. But after ten years, I mean at the present, there are so many valiant Americans who pray, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." But when praying with this prayer topic we must have absolute faith, not superficial faith. Once, America was an English colony. Then America proclaimed to the world that she was an independent country. To sign the Declaration of Independence was a matter of life and death. But a man famous in Chicago, John Hancock, signed first. Then the next person gained strength and signed; next, everybody signed the Declaration of Independence. So Illinois is the Land of Lincoln and Chicago is the city of John Hancock.

At the present, Americans look complacent and they don't look ambitious enough to make America once again a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But we must fight against our unbelief and pray until our prayers are answered. Whatever Jesus did, he prayed. Then God answered his prayer and everything was possible. In this chapter, we see that Jesus didn't pray directly, but he was full of prayer spirit, groaning over the unbelieving generation. We must repent like the boy's father who said, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief." Let's shout one time, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief." If anyone loves a girl and it doesn't work well, shout, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief," even though it sounds a little nasty.

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" (25). Look at the scene of the evil spirit running away. The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." The evil spirit's misconduct was too extreme. The evil spirit made the boy look dead.

Look at verse 27. "But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up

to his feet, and he stood up." Here we learn that Jesus had faith in God only; he drove out the evil spirit from the boy and stood him up. Jesus is the only Savior. Jesus is the only Son of God who can save us from demon possession. Jesus is the only Son of God who can give us faith to defeat the devil's scheme. Jesus is the one who gives us strength to fight against unbelief. Are you giving up in life or fighting against unbelief? Fighting against unbelief is a matter of life and death.

IV. Only by prayer (28-29)

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples spoke to him privately. In a whisper, they asked Jesus, "Why couldn't we drive it out? We are greatly embarrassed. You know, you gave us power to drive out the demons and the evil spirits, and to heal the sick during the evangelistic campaign. You must continue to give us the power to drive out evil spirits. Why did you take it away?" Actually, Jesus did not take it away. They did not pray. They did not fight against unbelief. They only pretended to heal a boy possessed by an evil spirit based on their experience in the evangelistic campaign. Look at verse 29. "He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'" Jesus did not rebuke his disciples' vanity and proud mind toward worldly people. He simply taught them that they should pray so that God might hear their prayer and God himself would solve the problem. Sometimes we believe, and we pray to God, and then think we can solve the problem. That's nonsense. When we pray to God, God solves the problem. In other words, we need absolute faith in God that he can do everything when we believe in him.

Today's passage sounds very real to us. We should not only take the pose to cast out an evil spirit; we must fight against unbelief in ourselves. We must pray earnestly until God answers our prayer and he himself solves the problems that we confront.