

Mark 9:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

Analysis

Jesus asked the father, 'How long is it ago since this came unto him?' (Πόσος χρόνος ἔστιν ὡς τοῦτο γέγονεν αὐτῷ;). This question wasn't for Jesus' information (He knew all things) but to draw out the father's faith and make the affliction's severity evident to observers. The father answered, 'Of a child' (ἐκ παιδιόθεν)—from childhood or infancy. This detail emphasizes the prolonged suffering and the father's long desperation. Jesus' question invited the father to articulate his need and suffering, deepening awareness of human helplessness and magnifying the coming miracle. Throughout Scripture, God often asks questions not for His benefit but to prompt human self-revelation and faith expression (Genesis 3:9; 4:9; John 21:15-17). Jesus' pastoral sensitivity in drawing out the father's story demonstrates compassionate engagement with suffering.

Historical Context

The detail 'from a child' indicates years of suffering without remedy. Ancient medical practice had no effective treatments for such conditions. The family would have exhausted all human resources—physicians, traditional healers, perhaps even pagan exorcists—without success. This prolonged affliction increased the miracle's significance when Jesus instantly healed the boy. The father's willingness to publicly describe his son's condition despite social stigma (disabilities often carried shame in ancient cultures) demonstrated desperate faith. Jesus' question created space for the father to be heard and valued, modeling pastoral care that sees individuals, not just problems.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' question model pastoral sensitivity that values hearing people's stories and suffering, not just solving problems?
2. What does the duration of suffering ('from a child') teach about God's timing and the value of persistent faith despite long unanswered prayers?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐπηρώτησεν	τὸν	πατέρα	αὐτῷ	Πόσος	χρόνος	ἐστὶν
And	he asked	G3588	his father	unto him	How long	ago	is it
G2532	G1905		G3962	G846	G4214	G5550	G2076
ώς	τοῦτο	γέγονεν	αὐτῷ	ό	δὲ	εἰπεν	παιδιόθεν·
since	this	came	unto him	G3588	And	he said	Of a child
G5613	G5124	G1096	G846		G1161	G2036	G3812

Additional Cross-References

Acts 9:33 (Parallel theme): And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.