

Mark 9:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Analysis

The father continued describing the demon's destructive intent: 'ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him' (πολλάκις καὶ εἰς πῦρ αὐτὸν ἔβαλεν καὶ εἰς ὕδατα ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν). The verb *apolesē* (ἀπολέση, 'to destroy') reveals the demon's murderous goal. This illustrates Satan's character as murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) and Jesus' mission to destroy the devil's works (1 John 3:8). The father then pleaded, 'if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us' (εἴ τι δύνη, σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς βοήθησον ἡμῖν). The conditional 'if thou canst' (*ei ti dynē*) reveals weak faith—doubt about Jesus' ability. Yet the appeal to 'compassion' (*splanchnistheis*, σπλαγχνισθεὶς, referring to visceral mercy) shows understanding that Jesus cares about suffering. The plural 'us' indicates the family's shared suffering—one member's affliction affects all.

Historical Context

The demon's attempts to kill the boy through fire and water represent ultimate demonic evil—seeking to destroy God's image-bearer. In ancient world, fire and water were common causes of accidental death, but this was clearly supernatural attack. The father's tentative 'if thou canst' reflects incomplete faith, perhaps damaged by the disciples' failure. He had witnessed their powerlessness and wasn't certain Jesus could succeed where they failed. Yet he brought his son anyway—weak faith is still faith. Jesus would address this directly (v. 23), teaching

that faith's object (Jesus' power) matters more than faith's strength. The father's plea for 'compassion' recognizes Jesus' character—not merely powerful but merciful.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the demon's murderous intent illustrate the spiritual battle's stakes and urgency in proclaiming Christ's deliverance?
2. What does the father's weak but persistent faith ('if thou canst... help us') teach about bringing our doubts and inadequate faith to Jesus rather than waiting until faith feels sufficient?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-----------------|--------|-------|----------|--------------|------------|-------|
| καὶ | πολλάκις | αὐτόν· | καὶ | εἰς | πῦρ | ἔβαλεν | καὶ | εἰς |
| And | ofttimes | him | And | into | the fire | it hath cast | And | into |
| G2532 | G4178 | G846 | G2532 | G1519 | G4442 | G906 | G2532 | G1519 |
| ὕδατα | ἵνα | ἀπολέσῃ | αὐτόν· | ἀλλ' | εἴ | τι | δύνασαι, | |
| the waters | to | destroy | him | but | G1487 | G5100 | thou canst | |
| G5204 | G2443 | G622 | G846 | G235 | | | G1410 | |
| βοήθησον | ἡμῖν | σπλαγχνισθεὶς | ἐφ' | ἡμᾶς | | | | |
| and help | us | have compassion | on | us | | | | |
| G997 | G2254 | G4697 | G1909 | G2248 | | | | |

