

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

After the disciples fail to cast out a demon from a boy, Jesus heals him and teaches about faith and the power of prayer and fasting.

Matthew 17:14-21 • Mark 9:14-29 • Luke 9:37-43

CHARACTERS: Jesus, The Boy, The Father, The Disciples, The Demon

THEMES: Faith, Prayer, Spiritual Warfare, Jesus's Power

WHEN JESUS CAME down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, they found the other disciples surrounded by a great multitude and the scribes questioning with them. A certain man from the multitude came kneeling to Jesus and crying out, 'Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed.' The father described his son's terrible condition: the demon would often cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him.

The desperate father explained, 'I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.' This public failure of the disciples had given the scribes opportunity to question and criticize. Jesus responded with words that expressed grief over the unbelief He encountered: 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.' His exasperation was directed not merely at the disciples but at the general lack of faith in that generation.

As they brought the boy to Jesus, the spirit saw Him and immediately tore the child, throwing him to the ground where he wallowed foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, 'How long is it ago since this came unto him?' The father answered, 'Of a child,' explaining that this demon had tormented his son from early childhood. Then the father made a heartfelt plea: 'If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.'

Jesus responded, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' The issue was not Jesus's ability but the father's faith. Immediately the father of the child cried out with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' This honest prayer acknowledged both his faith and his struggle with doubt, a prayer many believers can identify with. Jesus, seeing that the people came running together, rebuked the foul spirit, saying, 'Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.'

The spirit cried out and rent the boy terribly, then came out of him, leaving the child lying as if dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose, completely healed and delivered. When Jesus was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could not we cast him out?' Jesus said unto them, 'Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.' Jesus taught them that some spiritual battles require deeper spiritual preparation and discipline, that faith must be cultivated through communion with God.