

Limitless

Mark 9:14-29

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- I. The Impossible v.14-19
 - a. Scribes arguing with disciples
 - i. What are you discussing- ‘dispute with’
 1. *Scribes disputing against them*. The prep. denotes the hostility of the Scribes
 2. An argument had erupted between them and some scribes. The argument may very well have had to do with what means were necessary to effect a successful exorcism
 - ii. The lesson here, then, derives from a spectacular failure to fulfil the commission to cast out demons which has been given to the Twelve in 3:15 and 6:7, and which they have already begun to undertake successfully (6:13).
 1. The disciples’ failure has given them further grounds for skepticism.
 - b. Teacher
 - i. Teacher
 1. ordained person but usually refers to prominent citizens. This informal usage is consistent with what we observe with respect to Jesus. (Jesus had been called Rabbi by Peter in the earlier transfiguration episode.)
 - ii. Brought my Son possessed with Spirit
 1. Brought - The man’s aim had been to enlist Jesus’ help in person but in Jesus’ absence he has had to be content with the ‘second team’. Nonetheless he expected the disciples to be able to effect a complete deliverance of his son
 2. Slams to ground, foams, grinds, stiffens
 - a. These terms, and the behavior described in vv. 20, 26, indicate a temporary physical seizure caused sporadically by the ‘resident’ demon rather than a permanent condition
 - c. Disciples Could Not Cast
 - i. Unbelieving Generations
 1. Unbelieving- without trust or confidence, unworthy of credence
 - a. The significance of the OT view of faith may be seen in the fact that, as an expression of the particular being and life of the people of God which stands both individually and collectively in the dimension of a vital divine relationship, it embraces the whole span of this form of life
 - b. NT- should be trust as well as obedience

- c. More generally faith signifies in the Synoptists confidence in God's miraculous help or even in one's own miraculous power
 - d. if so, πίστις is confidence in the fulfilment of the divine promise
 - e. lack of confidence in one's own miraculous power
 - f. Jesus wonders how long he must put up with this unbelief, a query that may hint at his expectation of death.
2. Generations - - *generation, men of that time, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time and defined in terms of specific characteristics, generation, contemporaries*
- a. Jesus' reply is not addressed to the man, who seems not to have shown any lack of faith, but to the disciples, who have just been mentioned by the father, and to whom the words specially apply, since it was their unbelief that led to the fiasco
 - b. intolerable nature of his intercourse with a generation so spiritually dull and unsympathetic
- ii. How long shall I be with you
- 1. How Long shall I put up with you

II. All Things Are Possible v.20-27

- a. The Spirit threw the boy to the ground
- b. Has happened since Childhood
 - i. Childhood- This was no recent or temporary condition. The father's reply adds further cause for concern in that the seizures brought about by the demonic presence rendered the boy helpless and thus vulnerable to injury or death through fire or water
 - ii. That is, this is no passing condition but one that has plagued the man's son from early childhood. The implication is not only that this condition is "harder to break" (Gundry, 490) but that in all probability other exorcists besides Jesus' disciples had failed in attempts to rid the boy of the spirit. Jesus' ability to cast it out is therefore all the more impressive.
 - iii. Take pity on us and Help us
 - 1. Seeking Jesus' compassion and mercy
- c. If You Can?
 - i. If you Can - this man seems to doubt his ability. In the light of the disciples' recent failure the father is understandably cautious in asking for deliverance even by Jesus. This is clearly a difficult case, and not even Jesus may have the power to tackle it.
 - 1. "If you can!" repeats the father's words and stems from his frustration with his generation's lack of faith
 - 2. Jesus repeats the father's words in order to call attention to them, and to the doubt expressed in them, which would stand in the way of his petition.

- ii. All things are possible
 1. That the power which the disciples receive is the power of Christ, and that as such it is the power of God, which they possess only in personal faith,
 2. In this faith the believer shares in the rule of God and therefore, either actively or passively, experiences miraculous power. Here we have the uniqueness of NT miracles.
 3. for God's ability to do the impossible see further on 11:22–23
 4. the unlimited power of God in whom faith is placed; it rules out the suggestion that any force, certainly not the present demonic opponent, can be too much for God.
 5. the converse of this statement is also true: little is possible for him who has no faith.
- iii. To Him who believes
 1. Believes- A special kind of this faith is the confidence that God or Christ is in a position to help suppliants out of their distress, *have confidence*
 2. Here, however, it is the faith of the father rather than that of the exorcist which is in question; faith is not a mechanical aid to the exorcist, but rather the attitude, or better the relationship with God, required of all concerned if the force of evil is to be defeated.
- d. Father
 - i. I do believe
 - ii. Help my Unbelief
 1. help me to turn my unbelief into belief," but "help me out of my trouble, in spite of any unbelief that you may find in me." He claims at first, that he does believe, notwithstanding any appearance to the contrary in his language. And yet, he does not rest his case there, but pleads with Jesus to show him mercy in any case. He pleads the compassion of Jesus, instead of his own faith, and so unconsciously showed a genuine faith.
- e. Jesus heals
 - i. I command you
 1. Jesus commands the demon in the first person: ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι, "I command you." In the narrative the contrast with the disciples' earlier unsuccessful attempt is thus underscored: they had given commands, which the demon had ignored; this time it is Jesus himself who is giving the commands, which the demon cannot ignore.
 - ii. Come out and do not enter again
 - iii. Jesus raise him up and he got up
 1. The account of Jesus' taking his hand and raising him up echoes the language used of the raising of Jairus's daughter (5:41–42), but here we are left in no doubt that the impression of death was temporary and mistaken. This is not another resuscitation, but the

restoration of the boy to normality after a traumatic experience of exorcism.

2. Compounds the already astounding deed. The boy is able to stand on his own, thus demonstrating his restoration to health.

III. Anything With Prayer v.28-29

a. His disciples questioned their inability

b. This kind cannot come

i. anything but prayer

1. and though the explicit answer to their question in v. 29 is about prayer, the two concepts are closely related: the effectiveness of prayer depends on the faith of the one praying (11:22–24).
2. But the disciples' authority was always derivative, and prayer is an appropriate recognition of that fact in any encounter with spiritual evil. Perhaps, then, τοῦτο τὸ γένος is not after all intended to place this particular demon into a special class, but denotes demons in general as a γένος which can never be tackled in merely human strength. The disciples' problem, on this understanding, has been a loss of the sense of dependence on Jesus' unique ἐξουσία which had undergirded their earlier exorcistic success. They have become blasé and thought of themselves as now the natural experts in such a case, and they must learn that in spiritual conflict there is no such automatic power. Their public humiliation has been a necessary part of their re-education to the principles of the kingdom of God
3. But what was lacking was prayer, which is the expression of faith considered as dependence on the Divine power and confidence in that. It is the sense of God that conveys all kinds of spiritual power. But this power was not subjective, it did not reside in themselves, but was power to move God