

Mustard Seed Faith
Mark 9:14-29
July 28, 2013

Introduction

Faith is the theme of this passage

Mark 9:23-24 *"If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

Faith is the dominating feature of the Christian life because we have to put our trust entirely in God whom we cannot see.

2 Corinthians 5:7 *We live by faith, not by sight.*

Galatians 2:20 *The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Hebrews 11:1, 6 *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God.*

The evidence for our faith is Scripture because it tells us what we need to know. It is simply believing that God will do what He says He will do. It is the true and sure Word. Consider Caleb whose faith in God's power enable him to believe that the Israelites could conquer the land of Canaan. Consider Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who held on to God that even the threat of death could not break hold of their commitment to YHWH. This passage is a lesson in faith...the power of the mustard seed faith.

So far the disciples have walked with Jesus 24/7 for two and half years. They hear His teachings and see His miraculous powers. They have seen how He interacts with people with compassion and severity. They live by sight and soon they will be living by faith after Jesus returns back to heaven. For the entirety of the ministry, Jesus is with them.

Interestingly enough, they are granted power to perform what Jesus has performed. They heal the sick, cast out demons, raise people from the dead and preach the good news. Even though Jesus is not with them, He gives them authority to do His will. However, in this passage, they are not with Jesus and He does not give them the authority to cast out demons. They fail because of the lack of faith. They fail because they do not turn to God in prayer. Jesus gives them this important lesson about faith because in a few short months, He will be crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. Then He will be leaving them alone. They need the lesson that they cannot depend on their own power apart from God. It is impossible. When Jesus leaves, they will be living by faith. They know the truth because they have witnessed it; however, we know the truth because of the Word of God.

Our faith is not perfect. It is weak and wavering. Yet for our imperfect faith, it is sufficient! Our Lord never expects perfect faith—rather He starts with mustard seed faith!

Mark 9:14-29

14 *When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.*

- Large crowd did not find Jesus with the disciples (when He was in the mountain with Peter, James, and John)
- Scribes were arguing with the 9 disciples
 - Scribes were usually against Jesus and His teachings
 - They were taking advantage of Jesus not being with the disciples
- Arguing about what?

- Theology, Jesus' teachings (how He was against the Law)
- Disciples were on their own

15 *As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet Him.*

- Immediately
- Awestruck with Jesus
 - Because Jesus had transfigured?
 - No—Jesus nor the disciples told the crowd about what had happened
 - There was not enough time for them to do so
 - Jesus is the miracle worker—the celebrity (like we gush over movie or music stars)

16 *"What are you arguing with them about?" He asked. 17 A man in the crowd answered,*

- Nobody said anything—scribes or disciples
 - Disciples were embarrassed—so they are reticent
 - Scribes—because Jesus has corrected their mistakes many times before
- Matthew – man kneels before Jesus
 - Calls Him Lord
 - Man has some faith in Jesus, the person as well in His power
- Luke – the man shouted (called out) over the din of the crowd

17 *..."Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.*

18 *Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.*

- Demonic power
 - Makes him mute and deaf (in a bit)
 - Seizes the boy—violent episodes (Luke – the boy screams)
 - Throws him to the ground
 - Slams—concussion after concussion after concussion
 - Foams in the mouth
 - Luke – convulses (seizures)
 - Father is heartbroken over his son's condition (There is much emotions in this statement)

18 *...I asked Your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."*

- The disciples could not cast out the demon
 - Luke – the father begs the disciples to cast out the demon
 - Sense that they were trying multiple times and failing each time
 - Probably through their failure led the arguments with the scribes
- Father is desperate for his son's freedom

19 *"O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."*

- O unbelieving generation
 - Is He talking to the crowd? To the father? To the disciples?
- The disciples did not believe
 - They failed to heal the boy
 - Jesus was not with them
- Holy frustration / exasperation
 - Luke – perverse generation
 - How did you forget all that I have taught you? How did you get your faith twisted up?
- Unbelief is not a good thing in God's eyes
 - God does not understand our unbelief!

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered.

22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.

- Why did Jesus ask the man?
 - To gain more information? To be sure of His diagnosis?
 - To hear the father's pain
 - Boy has been demon-possessed for a while now—since he was a child
 - The boy sinned? Doubtful

John 9:3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

- The demon has tried to kill the boy
 - Fire—burn; Water—to drown
 - The father has spent much of his time watching over his son to make sure he does not kill himself

Note: God allows Satan to inflict pain and sometimes death. Here God is in complete control, He is sovereign and does not allow the demon to kill the boy. He does this so that His glory will be revealed. It is a lesson of the total dependence on God

- Jesus is the person that the father can relate to
- Jesus is not doing it for the crowds—He is doing this for the father and the disciples

22 ...But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

- If you can...what a weak statement of faith!
- He knows that Jesus is willing but he isn't sure if Jesus can do it

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

- If you can—statement of surprise
 - Do you believe that I can do this?
- Everything is possible for him who believes
 - Issue of faith for the disciples and the father
 - Issue is not that Jesus heals people
 - He has healed people without belief
 - Issue is the disciples' failure—we will see why they failed in a moment

24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

- Honest answer! Is my faith enough? Can it be enough?

25 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."

- Crowd swelling
 - Jesus acts—He is not here for their benefit
 - He is through with public ministry
 - He only works with His disciples now—teaching them

26 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead."

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

- Jesus' tender mercy!
 - Luke – Jesus gave the boy back to his father!

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

- Disciples—why did we fail?

29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

- This kind—I believe Jesus is talking about all demons...not just one type
- Prayer
 - Who prayed? The disciples? The crowd? The scribes?
 - Only one—the father

Note: This is not a lesson for us to cast out demons, nor is it a practice for us to cast out demons. This is not a lesson on healing either. This is not Jesus' point.

Note: KJV / NKJV adds "and fasting". This is missing from some of the Western manuscripts. Fasting has never been commanded by Jesus or the apostles as an act for us. It has been mentioned and it has been practiced, but it is never a command for us to do. Jesus never practiced fasting with the disciples, nor did He command them to fast.

Matthew 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

- Lack of faith = lack of prayer...the disciples pretty much shut prayer down
- What is Jesus' point
 - Life is full of extremely difficult situations (mountains in our way) that we have no power on our own to overcome it (we cannot move mountains on our own!)
 - We have to depend on God to provide—that is faith!
 - Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow because God will take care of our needs
 - Mustard seed faith—people think that we have to build on our faith
 - No—Jesus is saying we already have that faith at a minimum!
 - Our Lord is not expecting from us great faith
 - The father is the model of such faith
 - He has never walked with Jesus 24/7 or heard His preaching...yet through his weak, mustard seed faith, praying to Jesus, his son is healed
 - Faith requires prayer—we are showing our dependency to God
 - This doesn't mean that if I believe hard enough, then I can make things happen
 - Faith does not start with us—it starts with God and believing what He says

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

A small amount of struggling faith can draw us to God dependently and trustingly. Then God will pour out His power according to His will through our lives. –John MacArthur