

**Third Presbyterian Church**  
**Midweek Bible Study**  
**Miracle Series**  
**Miracle of Exorcism**  
**Lesson 4 – No more Faking the Faith**

**Mark 9:14-29 (NIV)**

<sup>14</sup> When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. <sup>16</sup> "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. <sup>17</sup> A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup> Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." <sup>19</sup> "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." <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. <sup>22</sup> "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." <sup>23</sup> "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." <sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. <sup>28</sup> After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" <sup>29</sup> He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

1. How has God helped you overcome your unbelief in the past?
2. How do you think Jesus felt about His disciples inability in this situation?
3. Definition of Faith is not believing that God can but God will in my situation
  - a. Explain this definition.
  - b. In understand this statement how does it affect your walk with the Lord?
4. Why is it absolutely important to know the limits of our faith in God?
  - a. How has God brought you to the limit of your faith and how did it change your life and relationship with Christ?
5. Is it ok to have doubts? Why or why not?
  - a. What do we do to overcome our doubts?
6. Why is "Faking the faith" so dangerous?
  - a. What are some characteristics of someone faking the faith?
  - b. How would you in love minister to someone faking the faith?
7. Give examples of "Food for our Faith."
8. When there is a sincere acknowledgement of our doubts and the limits of our faith, what is Jesus' response to that?
9. The sermon used a term "Vaccine Faith." What does this mean and why is this disposition dangerous?
10. How should we pray when we feel inadequate?
11. What can we learn from the father's example in this story?
12. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

## **The Problem of Spiritual Immaturity and Powerlessness, 9:14-29**

(9:14-29) **Introduction:** the Scripture and outline above point out a chronic problem among believers—spiritual immaturity and a powerless life and ministry.

1. Spiritual immaturity belittles and shames (v.14-18).
2. Spiritual immaturity grieves the Lord (v.19-22).
3. Spiritual immaturity must be acknowledged to receive God's blessings (v.23-27).
4. Spiritual immaturity can be conquered; spiritual power is available (v.28-29).

**1. (9:14-18) Spiritual Immaturity:** spiritual immaturity belittles and shames. As Jesus descended from the mountain, He saw that a great crowd had gathered at the foot awaiting His return. As He drew closer He noticed that the Scribes were ridiculing and shaming the disciples. The Scribes were, of course, questioning and belittling their credentials to minister. By discrediting the disciples, they hoped to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people (see notes—' Matthew 12:1-8; note—' Matthew 12:10 and Deeper Study #1—Matthew 12:10). When Jesus was seen approaching, the crowds were "greatly amazed," and ran to meet Him (see Deeper Study #1—Mark 9:15).

When Jesus reached the Scribes and the disciples, He asked the Scribes what it was they were questioning. Note how Jesus had stepped into the scene. He drew attention from the disciples' humiliation. He delivered them.

Note also who it was that answered Jesus. It was not the Scribes, but the desperate father of a needy child. The cause of the embarrassment was threefold.

1. There was the sickness that caused embarrassment (Mark 9:17. See Deeper Study #2, Evil Spirits—Mark 9:17-18.) Demon possession and epilepsy were cursed diseases, diseases that caused isolation and rejection by society. Because of society's reaction, families were often embarrassed when a member was afflicted. Just imagine this scene. The child and father were right in the midst of a shameful experience. They were the subject of the questioning and ridicule. Imagine their embarrassment in being the focus of the crowd's attention, and their problem of demon possession, their having sought help from apparent frauds.

**"And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6).**

**"But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14).**

**"My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me" (Psalms 44:15).**

2. There was the presence of weak faith. The father's faith was weak.

- ⇒ He was part of the "faithless generation" (Mark 9:19).
- ⇒ He was told "if thou canst believe" (Mark 9:23).
- ⇒ He had to cry, "help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

The child had not been healed because of weak faith. But it was not just the weak faith of the disciples; no one had faith enough to heal the child—not the father, not the disciples, not the religionists (Scribes).

**"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58).**

**"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31).**

**"Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me" (Matthew 17:17).**

**"And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful: how is that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40).**

3. There was a powerless ministry (Mark 9:18). The very persons who should have been able to help were the disciples. Nine disciples were there when the man first came for help, yet not a single one of them was able to help. They all lacked the power (see Deeper Study #3—Mark 9:18).

**Thought 1.** *No power* affects the testimony of believers (see Deeper Study #3—Mark 9:18).

**Thought 2.** Remember this critical fact: the world uses the life of believers to judge not only their testimony, but to judge Christ Himself. The world tries to discredit Christ because of the powerlessness of believers.

**Thought 3.** Note the three causes of embarrassment in this passage: a weak faith, a powerless ministry, and the boy's illness. Some illnesses (whether due to natural causes or brought on by immorality, drunkenness, or some other sinful behavior that destroys or brings injury to the body) will always cause embarrassment. There is no excuse for a believer living a sinful life, a life so sinful that his faith becomes weak, his ministry becomes powerless, or his body contracts a disease.

**"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).**

**"John...said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27).**

**"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).**

**"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing [power] as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5).**

**DEEPER STUDY #1 (9:15) Greatly Amazed (ekethambethe)**

**DEEPER STUDY #2 (9:17-18) Evil Spirits**

**DEEPER STUDY #3 (9:18) Power, Lack of**

**2. (9:19-22) Spiritual Immaturity:** spiritual immaturity grieves the Lord in three areas.

1. The faithlessness of men grieves Christ. Christ rebuked the generation standing before Him; but in all honesty, every generation was rebuked, for every generation has proven to be faithless. Having no faith saddened and brought sorrow to the Lord's heart, and He expressed that sorrow: "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer [bear with] you?"

Who is being rebuked? Who is faithless? To whom is Christ speaking? The answer is clearly seen. There was not a single person present who helped the desperate child: not the father, not the crowd, not the disciples, and not even the questioning religionists.

- ⇒ The father was unbelieving.
- ⇒ The crowd was unspiritual and worldly.
- ⇒ The disciples were ineffective and powerless.
- ⇒ The religionists were self-centered and critical.

**"And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other" (Mark 3:5).**

**"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways" (Hebrews 3:10).**

**"I [was] grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways" (Psalm 95:10).**

2. The pitiful condition of a person's need grieves Christ. The son was helpless, under the power of an evil spirit that tore (convulsed) him and caused him to wallow around, foaming at the mouth (see note—Mark 1:23-24; note—Mark 5:6-7). The sight of the boy in such a pitiful condition touched and grieved the heart of Christ.

3. The desperate plight of loved ones grieves the Lord. Jesus cared for the father just as much as He cared for the son. The father was hurting in his heart. It was his love for the son that drove him to seek Jesus in the first place. Jesus knew this, and Jesus knew something else. The father's faith was weak and needed strengthening, so Jesus asked the father about the history of the boy's illness. But note: Jesus was not interested so much in the boy's case history as He was in getting the father...

- to focus on his desperate need.
- to focus on Jesus who stood before him.
- to focus on Jesus who alone could meet his need.
- to focus on Jesus so much that his faith would be stirred.

Jesus' purpose worked: the man's attention was focused upon Jesus and upon his son's case history. The man said two significant things to Jesus.

1. "If thou canst do anything...help us."
2. "Have compassion on us, and help us."

The man lacked personal knowledge and faith in Jesus' power, but He cried for the compassion of Jesus—if Jesus really did have the power to help. There was no way Jesus would turn away from the man's cry for mercy (cp. Luke 18:13).

**Thought 1.** Note two significant statements. It is not so much our faith as it is our cry for mercy and compassion that arouses God to help us. It is not so much our faith as the object of our faith (God Himself) that saves us (see note—Mark 11:22-23).

**"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18).**

**"Because he that set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Psalm 91:14-15).**

**Thought 2.** The same three things that grieved Christ should grieve the heart of every believer. We should be grieved to the point that we act and minister just as Christ did.

**3. (9:23-27) Spiritual Blessings:** spiritual immaturity must be acknowledged to receive God's blessings.

1. Spiritual immaturity must be acknowledged by *faith*. The father's faith was immature. Jesus threw the father's words back to him: "It is not a question, If I can, but 'If thou canst believe. All things are possible to him that believeth.'"

- a. All things are possible to the Son of God. The power of God is available, but a person must trust in God's power.
- b. The great principle of prayer and faith was being taught to the man.

**"And all things, what soever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). (See note—Mark 11:22-23.)**

**"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).**

2. Spiritual immaturity must be acknowledged by *humility and crying for help*. The man was weak, but his need was desperate. He *accepted* the Lord's Word...

- about his being weak (sinful) and needing help personally.
- about his lack of faith being the problem.

The man responded in humility and cried out with tears, "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Note that he cried out for Jesus to help him *even* in his faith. He needed help even in believing; but he did the one essential, he cried out with all his heart and being, *confessing* that he needed help.

**"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).**

**"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).**

**"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).**

**"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13).**

3. Spiritual blessings are secured by Jesus' Word and power. Note several things.

- a. Jesus healed the boy when He saw the crowd running toward them. He had apparently pulled the father and boy to the side to help the father's concentration (cp. Mark 9:25. See note, pt.1—Luke 11:14-18.)

- b. It was the word of Jesus that healed the boy. It was His Word that broke the devil's power. The word "rebuked" (epetimese) is strong, authoritative, even severe. Satan cannot stand before God's Word. Christ has spoiled the principalities and powers of evil (Col. 2:15).
- c. The evil spirit made one last effort to disrupt and discredit the power of Christ. The evil spirit (as so often happens) apparently attempted to destroy the boy.
- d. Jesus took the boy by the hand and lifted him up, and the boy arose, being healed.

**4. (9:28-29) Spiritual Immaturity— Power— Prayer— Fasting:** spiritual immaturity can be conquered; spiritual power is available.

1. Immaturity can be conquered by *seeking spiritual power*. The disciples sought to know why they failed. They wanted to know the cause. Remember: Jesus had already given them power over evil spirits, and they had already exercised such power. They could not understand why they had failed when they had been successful before (Mark 3:14-15; cp. Luke 9:1; Luke 10:17).

2. Immaturity can be conquered by *prayer and fasting*. Jesus pointed to one thing: the disciples were not living close enough to God. They were not praying and fasting enough, not seeking Him enough, not putting Him before food and other things. They were taking time for other things, taking time to eat, but not taking time for God.

**Thought 1.** God must be depended upon so much that food and everything else are set aside in order to seek Him. A man's heart must sometimes crave God so much that food and all else are set aside to seek Him.

**"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).**

**"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14).**

**"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 4:29).**

**"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).**

**"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17).**

**DEEPER STUDY #1**

(9:15) **Greatly Amazed** (*exethambēthēsan*<sup>PWS: 1794</sup>): to be filled with wonder. What amazed the people when they "beheld" Jesus?

1. Perhaps Jesus retained some of the glory of the transfiguration (cp. Exodus 34:29 when Moses came down from the mountain after having been with God). The people may have seen a glow, a majestic countenance about Jesus.

2. Perhaps Jesus came at such an opportune time that the people were amazed to see Him, as though His timing was destined. He arrived just when His disciples needed help.

3. Perhaps Jesus walked with a renewed aire, a more authoritative and decisive countenance than before. Just coming from the transfiguration was bound to instill a renewed confidence and authority within Him.

**DEEPER STUDY #2**

(9:17-18) **Evil Spirits:** the son's illness seems to have been both physical and spiritual. The description of the illness in Mark points toward what is known today as epilepsy and demon possession (Matthew 17:15; Mark 9:17-18; Luke 9:39). The demon possession in particular seems to have heightened and aggravated the

condition, perhaps causing some suicidal tendencies ([Matthew 17:15](#); [Mark 9:22](#)). Throughout the gospels this seems to be one of the major works of evil spirits: to *heighten and aggravate* existing conditions.

Note the description of the three gospels. Luke's description is especially interesting because it is the description of a physician.

Mark 9:17-18

A dumb spirit  
It takes Him (seizes hold)  
It tears him (strikes down)  
He foams  
He gnashes with his teeth  
He pines away (wastes away)

Luke 9:39

A spirit (evil)  
Takes him  
Cries out  
Tears him  
Foams  
Bruises him

Matthew 17:15

A devil ([Mark 9:18](#))  
Lunatic  
Sore vexed  
Falls into the fire  
Falls into the water

### DEEPER STUDY #3

(9:18) **Power, Lack of:** Why do the servants of God fail? Why do they often lack power? Why does their faith weaken? This experience of the disciples reveals much about spiritual failure and lack of power.

1. A sense that Christ is far away and out of reach makes one ineffective. The indwelling presence and power of Christ are just not felt—not to the extent that they need to be available. In the above situation Christ was absent, but His power was still available. The disciples were just not all that aware of His power.
2. The lack of leadership causes the faith and loyalty of some to weaken. The nine disciples apparently had no leader to stand forth as a champion of faith and power.
3. Uncompromising unbelief can weaken one's trust ([Mark 9:16](#)). This was true of the Scribes' unbelief and questioning. They distracted and sapped the disciples' faith and power.
4. An atmosphere of questioning and unbelief often affects the faith and power of a person's life. A terrible atmosphere of unbelief and distrust in God was created by everyone present: the man's questionable belief ([Mark 9:22](#)), the Scribes' questioning ([Mark 9:16](#)), the disciples' lack of faith and power, and the people's disturbance over the whole affair.

What happens when the servants of God have *no power*? What are the results of a powerless life and ministry?

1. No power causes embarrassment and shame.
2. No power causes the world to question and ridicule and belittle.
3. No power questions the deity (validity) of Christ and God.
4. No power causes the questioning of God and His ability to deliver.

The answer to no power is given by Christ. Power comes (1) by seeking, and (2) by prayer and fasting ([Mark 9:28-29](#)).

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark.