

**April 14, 2019**

**Mark 9:14-27**

### **Commands**

**Introduction** Have you ever felt helpless in a situation? You are confronted with a problem or issue and you do everything in your power to bring some resolution or figure it out yourself; but, that does not work. Now, you are completely out of options and helpless as you wait for something to take place. In the passage for this week's lesson, we meet a father who has a desperate need. His son is possessed with an unclean spirit. He has tried to get help. So far, nothing has worked. Now, he goes to Jesus. How will Jesus respond?

**Powerless (Mark 9:14-18).** Jesus has been with Peter, James, and John on a mountain where He was transfigured before them (Mark 9:2-13). This is one of the key events in the ministry of Jesus. When they descend from the mountain, they encounter a large crowd gathered with the other disciples (Mark 9:14). This is what we find: a father has brought his son to the disciples because the son has an unclean spirit. This spirit torments the son in a variety of ways. For example, the spirit "makes him unable to speak" (Mark 9:17); "it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid" (Mark 9:18); and, the spirit "has thrown him into fire or water to destroy him" (Mark 9:22). One can certainly understand the urgency on the part of the father who desires to see his son freed from this situation. Seeking help, the father has asked the disciples "to drive it out" (Mark 9:18). Surprisingly, the text reports that they could not cast this spirit out (Mark 9:18). Where could the father turn next?

**Hopeless (Mark 9:19-21).** Upon hearing that the disciples could not cast this unclean spirit out, Jesus responds with what seems like frustration. He stated, "You unbelieving generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you?" (Mark 9:19). Perhaps Jesus' frustration exists because just a few chapters earlier, He gave the disciples authority over unclean spirits (Mark 6:7); and, "they drove out many demons" (Mark 6:13). Now, however, they can do nothing. So, Jesus commands them to bring the boy to him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it "threw the boy into convulsions" (Mark 9:20). This reaction caused Jesus to question the boy's father: "how long this had been happening to him?" (Mark 9:21). "From childhood," the father responded (Mark 9:21). Based on the physical effects which his son has experienced as well as the length of time he has had this spirit, it is easy for one to understand his desperate plea to Jesus: "If you can do anything . . ." (Mark 9:22).

**Faithless (Mark 9:22-24).** Based on his previous experience with the disciples, the father's faith appears to waver. He said to Jesus, "If you can . . ." In His response, Jesus repeated the phrase from the father word for word and added the following comment, "Everything is possible for the one who believes" (Mark 9:23). To this, the father "cried out, 'I do believe; help my unbelief!'" (Mark 9:24). Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and commanded it to come out of the boy. The spirit "came out, shrieking and throwing him into terrible convulsions" (Mark 9:26). When the spirit left, it appeared to many that the boy had died (Mark 9:26). Jesus took him by the hand, though, and raised him up (Mark 9:27). Can you imagine the joy and relief that the father felt?

**Conclusion** This week's lesson reminds us of a couple of key spiritual truths. First, just like Jesus and the three disciples, it is not uncommon for us to come down from the mountains to encounter difficult circumstances. Second, just like the father, our faith can waver at times when we are faced with seemingly insurmountable barriers. The key in both of those instances, as well as in our lives today, is to go to Jesus!