

File No. 129

**MARK 9:14–29**

Matthew 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–43

**THE BOY WITH A WICKED SPIRIT**

(SBS Bk 5 Story No. 11)

*Story Notes*

A man came seeking Jesus, pleading for mercy and hoping he would exorcise a demon from his son. In the absence of Jesus, the disciples had been unable to help. To make matter worse, scribes had arrived, presumably to check on what Jesus was doing. They would not have regarded Jesus as entitled to exorcise, and the failure of his disciples would support their point.

Jesus was distressed because he had come 'to show the mercy promised' to Israel (Luke 1:72) and his disciples had misrepresented his mission to this man, and to the representatives of Israel.

In the Lord's Sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:30), and twice out at sea (Matt. 8:26; 14:31), and once after crossing the lake (Matt. 16:8), Christ had rebuked the disciples for lack of faith, but never as severely as here. He linked the apostles with the spirit of their age, and as an evil generation (Matt. 11:16; 12:39-45; 16:4; 23:36).

The demon convulsed the boy uncontrollably when he saw Jesus and Jesus asks how long this had been happening. The father thinks Jesus may lack power to heal someone so badly affected. It is not Christ's power that is in question but this man's faith. So the father professes his faith, and pleads that his unbelief may be forgiven. Perhaps he has heard the rebuke addressed to the disciples.

The mercy and might the disciples could not supply, Christ supplied instantly. The disciples were shamed and sought to remedy their defect with an enquiry as to why they could not do this deed.

The disciples had been given authority over demons (Mark 6:7). Perhaps they had come to think that this power was now theirs. Rather, Jesus says, the power to operate with the gifts given by him comes by ongoing prayer.

Their faith was little, but even faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. Later on, Jesus would say again that if they had faith, they could move mountains (Matt. 21:21).

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