

## Exegetical Notes, Mark 9:14-32

### *“A Boy with an Evil Spirit”*

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

## Mark 9:14-32

### Verse 14

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

- Jesus, Peter, James, and John returned from the Mount of Transfiguration (See Mark 9:1-13) and found the other nine disciples in the center of a large crowd of people. The disciples were arguing with the Jewish authorities.

### Verse 15

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

- The scene shifted when Jesus appeared. The people's attention was turned to him and away from the raging debate.

### Verse 16

*“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.*

- Jesus wanted the disciples to tell him what was happening.

### Verse 17-18

*A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 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.”*

- There was a man in the crowd who had brought his son to Jesus because the boy was “possessed by a spirit.” The age of the boy is not specifically given. The word implies someone who is not yet fully grown.

- The boy seems to have suffered from grand mal seizures. When a seizure happened, the boy fell down and foamed at the mouth. His body became rigid and he clenched his teeth.
- The “Spirit” had taken the boy’s ability to speak. The phrasing implies that the boy had had normal speech previously, but that he had lost the ability.
- The disciples, without Jesus present, had attempted to drive the spirit away but had been unsuccessful.

### **Verse 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.”***

- Jesus clearly centers attention on the central problem. The disciples were unable to drive the spirit away because of their lack of faith or, more probably, because they had put their confidence in the wrong things.

### **Verse 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.***

- When the spirit saw Jesus it attempted to frighten him by throwing the boy into a seizure. The spirit caused the seizure to show Jesus how powerful it was and to scare him back.

### **Verse 21-22**

***Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. “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.”***

- Jesus asked the question of the boy’s father so that we would know that this spirit had controlled this child for a long time. The spirit thought that the length of his possession gave him authority over the boy and a certain right to control him.
- The discussion also reveals the purpose of the spirit’s behavior. He wanted to control the boy as he did so as to make him less than human, so as to drive out of the child the image of God. The spirit’s desire was to kill the child or to destroy his humanity.

- The father is so distraught by the situation and the power of the spirit that he is not sure if Jesus can help his son, but he hopes that Jesus will try.

### **Verse 23**

***“If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”***

- The problem is not Jesus’ ability to help the boy. He CAN help. The issue is the faith of the father. Does he really believe that bringing his son to Jesus will make a difference?

### **Verse 24**

***Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!”***

- The boy’s father recognizes the conflict that rages within him. He does believe that Jesus can help his son to a point. But he also knows that he has some doubt about that. Within him is both faith and doubt. He realizes that if faith, belief, is the issue something must change in him before his son can be cured. He asks Jesus to change him first, to remove his doubt, so that his son can be helped.

### **Verse 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.”***

- Jesus saw that his attention to this boy and his father had caught the interest of the crowd. People were beginning to gather around. So, without waiting any longer and so as to make as little a scene as possible, Jesus commanded the spirit that controlled the child to leave him and to never enter the boy again.

### **Verse 26-27**

***The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.***

- The spirit that controlled the boy was mean and perverse. It had to obey the command of Jesus to leave the child. But it would not do so without one last demonstration of its power. It violently seized the boy and left him looking as if he had died. But Jesus’ touch restored the child.

### **Verse 28**

***After Jesus had gone indoors his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”***

- The disciples were concerned about their failure (see verse 18) to drive out this spirit. So when they were alone with Jesus, they asked him why the spirit would not listen to them.
- Jesus had already answered their question. See verse 19. They really did not believe that they had the power to do what they were trying to do. Most likely they had forgotten that the power was not in them but in him and had been attempting to act on their own rather than in him.

### **Verse 29**

***He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”***

- This spirit was particularly perverse. It apparently felt that it had a right to this child. It only gave up its place reluctantly even at Jesus’ command.
- Apparently, the disciples had not taken time to pray, to ask God for help with such a bold spirit. They had proceeded on their own believing that they could take care of the matter. They forgot to turn to the Father for help. They forgot that they were but flesh and blood. They forgot from whom their strength comes. They did not pray.

### **Verse 30-32**

***They left that place and passed through Galilee, Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.”***

- Jesus took the disciples off alone, away from other people, to teach them things that they needed to know but which others would misunderstand. He spoke to them about the events that would surround his death and resurrection.
- There is a time for closed groups, groups that are restricted. Jesus himself showed us this. Some deep teaching is too much for those not ready for it.

- The disciples did not understand what Jesus was telling them and they were afraid to ask him questions.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *A Boy With an Evil Spirit*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)