

HELP MY UNBELIEF

Request: “I have a Christian friend who came from an atheistic background. She remarked to me that whenever doubts creep into her life about God. She claims this verse “**I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.**” Would you do a study on this Scripture and subject?”

This statement was made by a father of a demon possessed son in our lesson text. This lesson is found in the synoptic gospels (Matt.17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; and Luke 9:37-43). According to Luke, this occurred the day following the Transfiguration as Jesus, Peter, James and John returned to join the other nine disciples (Luke 9:37). A great multitude of people had gathered to listen to a fiery debate between the nine disciples and some Jewish scribes (Mark 9:14).

When Jesus asked what had occurred to start this fiery debate, a man from the crowd said that he was the cause of it. The man went on explaining that he had brought his only son to be healed from demon possession. He explained that in the absence of Jesus, the nine disciples took it upon themselves to heal his son. But were unable (Luke 9:38).

We will examine the lesson text by the following six homiletical points (Mark 9:14-29).

- Debate of Philosophies (Mk.9:14-16)
- Disciple’s Problem (Mk.9:17-18)
- Declaration of Perversion (Mk.9:19)
- Demon Possession (Mk.9:20-22)
- Divine Power (Mk.9:23-27)
- Doctrinal Prayer (Mk.9:28-29)

Our lesson will study SIX of these points as they related to the statement “I do believe; help my unbelief”

1. The Jewish scribes were debating with the nine disciples regarding the divine credentials of Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Mark 9:14-16).

Doctrinal principle: The ministering disciples of Jesus will come under attack because of their association with the person, teachings, and work of Jesus Christ (2 Tim.3:10-12).

These Jewish religious leaders may not have believed that Jesus was the Christ but we will see that this demon believed (James 2:19).

Satan uses pre-empt strikes like this to soften us up for later warfare. The disciples were already struggling with the doctrine of the Suffering Servant of Christ (9:29-33; Isa.52-53). Satan used this same technique against Adam and Eve (1 Tim.2:14). **It can’t be, “I want to believe; help my unbelief.”**

2. Note that Jesus took-up the fight for these struggling disciples (Mk.9:16).

Jesus went immediately to the heart of the issue: “What are you discussing with them?” Jesus came to the rescue of His disciples who were over their heads in this spiritual slug-feast (Matt.16:6; 1 Tim.6:12; 2 Tim.2:14-16).

The father of the demon possessed son stepped out so that his cause would not be lost in this debate (suzeteo). “Please do not lose sight of my plight!” The healing of his son was being lost by all this debating.

3. These Jewish scribes had created an enormous problem for these nine disciples:

They challenged the divine credentials of Jesus especially when they were unable to cast out the demon and weren't able to explain why (9:17-19).

They were already struggling with aspects of the messiahship of Jesus (Mark 8:31-33; 9:29-32). Jesus addressed their failure as **lack of faith** (Matt.17:20 – faith as little as a mustard seed would have worked) and **lack of prayer** (Mark 9:28-29; **11:22-24**).

The father explained that the disciples were unable to heal his only son because this was the worst case of demon possession (Mark 9:18; Luke 9:35; Matt.17:14-15).

Doctrinal principle: There may be problems too big and severe for us to handle alone or even with nine other disciples. But they are never too big or severe for Jesus Christ (Phil.4:13; 1 Pet.5:7). But they will require proper faith (faith cycle) and prayer (1 John 5:14-15).

4. Jesus declared that this whole situation was typical of a greater national problem of unbelief and perversion (Mark 9:19).

At this time, the Jewish nation was suffering by national reversionism and headed for its fall to Rome (Lev.26).

“O **unbelieving and perverted** generation, how long shall I be with you?” “How long shall I put up with you?” (The idea: then what?) “Bring him to Me.” (Matt.17:17)

- Apisteo unbelieving; faithless (John 20:27) disciples and religious leaders
- Diastrepho perverse; twist; corrupt (Phil.2:15-16) demon possessed son

However, these are natural reflections of the declining priest-nation under divine disciples (Lev.26 and Deut.28; Rom.1:18-32 and Matt.24:1-14).

5. One of the messianic signs to the Jewish nation was miraculous healing of impossible sicknesses (Matt.4:23-25; Luke 4:14-30; 1 Cor.1:22).

Christ didn't come to save from sickness or physical death but from sin and spiritual death (1 Tim.1:15; Rom.5:12; John 5:24).

6. Divine power flowed from God Almighty through the faith cycle (Mark 9:23-27). Note the father's request and Jesus' response in Mark 9:22-23.

- **Father** “But if (1cc / true) you can do ANYTHING (and you can); take pity on us and help us.”
The father is not questioning Jesus' ability to heal only His willingness to do.
- **Jesus** “If (1cc) you can (and you can)! ALL THINGS are possible to him who believes.”
Jesus is not questioning the father's ability to believe only his willingness to believe.

Lord do you mean that my son's healing is in my belief even though your disciples have failed!
“Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, I do believe; help my unbelief.” (Mark 9:24)

In this instant, this father separated himself from his perverse generation. “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to me.” (Matt.17:17) (**Then what? – this father showed us!**)

In that instant, the father's faith in Jesus brought healing for his son: “And Jesus rebuked him (the demon), and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.” (Matt.17:18)

“ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HIM WHO BELIEVES.”