

Mark 9:2-13 – Weak Christians

Calvin, Robertson, TSK, GreekLexicon, Alexander, Poole, Vincent, Trapp, JFB, Barnes, Henry, Geneva, Clarke, Spurgeon, Rienecker, Handfuls

Brothers and sisters in the Lord: **Real Christianity is grounded on the work of Christ alone** – not on traditions, not on what is culturally acceptable, or not on what you think is best. **Jesus confirmed the fact that real Christianity was grounded in him verbally and confirmed that fact by many miracles**. So to be a well-built, strong Christian, you need to be grounded on Christ alone. To be grounded on Christ alone you need faith – strong faith – through which you hold on the foundation.

But you have to admit that there are times when you **don't read your Bible like you should**, you **don't reflect on his miracles** to confirm that truth, and you **don't pray like you should**. Because of these failures your faith becomes weak and you become a weak, shaky Christian. **That was exactly what happened to the disciples as well.**

So today you will see how the Lord helped his weak people and restored their faith after their failure.

Our headings are:

The Disciples' faith was weak

The Disciples' faith was strengthened by Christ Word and Work

The Disciples' faith was strengthened by Prayer

Our goals are: **That you will regularly let the Lord strengthen you so that you will be strong and productive in your Christian life.**

The Disciples' faith was weak

14 And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes (文士) disputing with them.

1. When Jesus and the 3 witnesses (见证人) came down from the Mount of Transfiguration (变像) there was a big cabal (阴谋), a loud argument going on between the scribes and his 9 disciples there.

15 Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him.

2. Seeing Jesus, the people ran to him.

It is likely that they ran to him **because he still had a glow (光亮) on his face** (traces of transfiguration), like Moses did when he came down from Mt. Sinai. (Exodus 34) And surely **they wanted answers to the problem before them**, as you shall see.

16 And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?"

3. Jesus then questioned the people about the reason for the ruckus (争吵, 喧闹).

17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has **a mute (哑巴的) spirit**. 18 "And wherever **it seizes him, it throws him down**; he **foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth**, and **becomes rigid**. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

4. A humble (谦卑的) man (Matthew said he came kneeling to Jesus) answered Jesus' question.

He had brought his deaf and mute son to the disciples to exorcise the demon (驱魔, 赶鬼) that possessed him but they could not cast out the demon – like Jesus had done many times before. This demon had often **tried to kill his son**. (That's what demons do.) The boy would **foam at his mouth, cry out in anguish (痛苦)**, and **have seizures (抽风)** – and literally look **like he was dead from pure exhaustion (精疲力尽)**.

The fact that the disciples could not cast out the demon exposed their feeble (虚弱的, 微小的) faith.

(The KJV says this boy was a lunatic (疯子) . He was not. He was an epileptic 癫痫病患者.)

19 He answered him and said, "**O faithless generation**, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."

5. Jesus rebuked his disciples for having weak faith and not being able to cast out the demon because he had given them power to cast out demons.

Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

Even though Jesus used the term "faithless" 没有信心) **he meant that his disciples had "weak" faith?** How can we know that he meant they had "weak faith" and that they were not totally "faithless?"

First, Jesus was **speaking to his saved disciples** – they had **saving faith** (得救的信心) . He was preparing them to preach the Gospel throughout the world. **Second, Jesus often spoke using hyperbole** (夸张的手法) . So when he said "faithless generation" he did not mean that they were without faith. He spoke that way to make a point.

6. Jesus rebuked his disciples for having little (sanctifying (成圣的)) faith - faith to live lives of trust after you become a Christian. So this was not referring to saving faith. No one is ever "a little saved."

7. Lessons:

a. The Devil and his people will always take opportunity to attack you when you are weakest – when you are straying (偏离) from church, when you are not reading your Bible, and when you are not praying! Sometimes your enemies will try to make you look foolish for wrongs you do, or make you feel ashamed for doubts you have. Don't be surprised by it. This is what the Scribes did to the 9 disciples who remained behind when Jesus went up the Mount of Transfiguration.

b. When your children have difficulties, take their troubles to the Lord in prayer. When you have difficulties, pray! There is no one else to go whom you may go. The Lord is the only one who truly cares. Don't waste this precious gift.

c. It is embarrassing (令人尴尬的) to the Lord Jesus if you lack sanctifying faith and complain when you are injured in an accident, when you face persecution (逼迫) , or when you face death! It is embarrassing to him because he already saved you and gave you security in your soul (saving faith) and he gave you the tools (sanctifying faith) to face these challenges, but you don't use them...or you don't use them properly.

The Disciples' faith was strengthened by Christ's Word and Work

20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately **the spirit convulsed** (使抽搐) **him**, and he **fell** on the ground and **wallowed** (打滚), **foaming at the mouth**.

1. Jesus then told them to bring the possessed (被鬼附的) child to him.

In a last ditch effort (最后的努力) , the Devil tried to kill the child. Isn't he always like that? That is his goal!

21 So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "**From childhood.**" 22 "And often **he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him**. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

2. Jesus then asked the father how long the child was demon possessed, deaf, and mute.

The man said his son was demon possessed from his childhood and the demon often tried to burn or drown him. The Lord asked this to prove his power to the world that his was not a hoax (骗

局) ...and to confound (使混淆) the scribes.

23 Jesus said to him, "**If you can believe**, all things are possible to him who believes."

3. Jesus then assured (保证) the man that if believed his Words and get strong sanctifying faith that his son would be healed.

24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "**Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!**"

4. How did the man respond?

a. He cried. He genuinely wanted his son – his only son- to be healed. The desire was heartfelt.

b. He confessed his sanctifying faith – whatever little he had. He was already a believer.

c. He called out for an increase in his sanctifying faith. What was in his heart came out.

25 When **Jesus saw that the people came running together**, He **rebuked the unclean spirit**, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" 26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and **came out of him**. And he **became as one dead**, so that many said, "He is dead."

5. Jesus then rebuked the evil spirit in the deaf and mute child, commanding it to leave and never enter the boy's body again.

His body was so weakened by the demon that when the demon left him the boy appeared to be exhausted – as one dead. The people thought he was dead. **But his father's faith was coming alive – his faith was strengthened by Christ's Word and works!**

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

6. Jesus then took the boy by the hand and raised him up from the ground.

The child, **who was terrorized for such a long time**, and his parents **who had to watch him suffer**, were both freed by faith!

7. Lessons:

a. What blessings come on a child on account of his parents' faith! This child wasn't even in his right mind! (This is why baptism of infants is such a precious thing!) The child was unconscious but the Lord worked good in him! The Lord did not treat him as a pagan.

b. You children, thank God that you are brought into the covenant and put in a special place and receive blessings!

c. What graciousness the Lord showed to the man who was weak in faith! The man acknowledged that his faith was weak and he asked for his faith to be strong. Jesus made his faith strong. And then Jesus rewarded his sanctifying faith.

d. Jesus strengthened the people's faith by his Words and work! Imagine how this would have strengthened the faith of his disciples and **humiliated (被羞辱) the scribes!** Imagine how this increasing faith **helped early Christians to endure as their bodies were torn apart by hungry lions** and the Romans cheered in approval! Imagine how this increasing faith will help you when you **face the greatest trials (试炼) of your life – death, diseases, and sadness.** Faith keeps you focused on Jesus.

The Disciples' Faith was strengthened by Prayer

28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 So He said to them, "**This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.**"

1. The disciples saw and heard what Jesus did and were surely thankful for his work, but they then came and asked him to clarify why they could not cast out the demon from the young boy.

They were believers. They said the right words. But nothing happened. They should have been able to cast out the demon.

2. So Jesus pointed out that they were not able to cast out the demon because they had weak sanctifying faith.

You see this more fully in Matthew's account.

Matthew 17:20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed (芥菜种子), you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

The truth is, **there are measures of faith**. Some have faith as a mustard seed...some have faith like a mountain. In the case before them, the child had been possessed from youth by the evil spirit, so the evil spirit had a stronger hold on him – a deeper interest in staying with the boy, and would fight harder. Remember, **demons have various strengths and varying degree of wickedness**. Some are more determined. You can know this from your own life. If you develop a habit for a long time it is more difficult to break that habit. It requires more work.

3. But now Jesus pointed out something else that was missing and so accounted for their weak faith:

Intense (迫切的) prayer.

What is the relationship between faith and prayer? Why is prayer (and fasting) so important? Prayer is important because faith comes through prayer –intense prayer, even prayer with fasting. The Word by itself is useless! It is always tied to prayer!

And since faith comes by degrees, with more prayer and the more intense prayer, and with fasting...the greater will be the faith. And the disciples needed great faith to cast out the demons that had a stranglehold (扼住咽喉, 压制) on the boy.

4. Lessons:

a. Some know the Word of God but have weak faith and live defeated lives because they don't pray (and fast) like they should. You need prayer with fasting. You must not read the Bible without prayer. The Word does not become real...believable...without prayer. If you read the Word without prayer, your faith can become weak. There is no other way to strengthen your faith to face the trials and hold on to Jesus but through the Word and prayer.

b. Poole: Faith has power. Unbelief brings mischief (狡黠, 恶作剧).
Strengthen your faith!

Conclusion:

Because of their weak sanctifying faith, the disciples were not able to cast out the demons from the possessed boy. Jesus then strengthened his disciples' faith by his words and works. Almost all of these same men's faith was so strengthened that they were martyred (殉道) for their Savior.

Brothers and sisters:

1. The Devil and his minions (走狗, 仆从) are out to steal, kill, and destroy. He uses people around you to mock you, condemn you, and kill you, if possible. He attacks your mind and your body, your people and your possessions. If you are weak in faith, you

will buckle (变形, 弯曲) under the pressure and compromise.

2. To become strong and face the Devil's attacks you need to have sanctifying faith.

Yes, you have faith that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and that is good. Every Christian has this faith. But you need an increase in trusting Jesus in all areas of your life – sanctifying faith.

3. You get this increase in faith by going to the Word of God...hear God's Words, see his great works...and pray – pray intensely – and fast - that God would work through his Word and increase in your faith so you face whatever arrows the Devil shoots your way.

Finally: As Christians have saving faith. We only struggle with sanctifying faith. But if you are not a Christian, you live under the threat of eternity in hell without saving faith. Do you want saving faith, faith to trust that Jesus died on the cross for you as a sinner? Then ask God for that faith! He gives it for free. This is the start you need.