

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 9: 19-32

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you; this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 9, verses 19 to 32.

Yesterday we read about Jesus, after descending the mountain with Peter, James, and John, discovering a debate between the nine disciples and the scribes who remained at the foot of the mountain. The debate revolved around the issue of casting out demons. It turned out that a child was afflicted by a mute spirit, and his father brought him to Jesus seeking help. At that time, while Jesus and the disciples were on the mountain, the nine disciples left below were unable to cast out the demon. Furthermore, some scribes arrived to cause trouble for Jesus, leading to an argument with His disciples. Jesus, after understanding the situation, sighed deeply.

Verse 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.'"

Jesus sighed for that unbelieving generation. At that time, the generation rejected the Lord, represented by the scribes, but on the other hand, even Jesus' disciples couldn't provide genuine help. Fast forward two thousand years to today's generation, and the situation remains the same because Satan continues to rule this world. It's not surprising that this world rejects the Lord, but on the other hand, the Church also fails to provide genuine help, and this should serve as a reminder to us.

The Church's primary role should be to bring people to the Lord and provide genuine assistance. However, too often, the Church is preoccupied with theological debates, entangled in various ideological politics, and even embroiled in worldly disputes. If the Church cannot bring people to the Lord, it cannot offer genuine help. Jesus' words to the father, "Bring him to Me," serve as a reminder to the Church

today: elevate Christ in the Church, so that people encountering the Church, encounter Christ.

Verse 20: "So they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth."

We see that while the scribes did not recognize Christ, the demon did. As soon as the child was brought before Jesus, the demon caused the child to convulse violently; his whole body shook and twitched uncontrollably, causing him to fall to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. The demon knew what Jesus was about to do next, so it preemptively tried to harm the child by taking control of him.

Verse 21-22: "So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. 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.'"

At this moment, Jesus engaged in a conversation with the child's father. The child was completely under the control of the demon and had no ability to act on his own. Therefore, Jesus intended to heal the child by helping the father. It turned out that the child had been possessed by the demon since childhood. This demon had repeatedly thrown the child into fire and water, seeking to destroy him and take his life. This was a serious matter. Generally, when a demon possesses someone's body, it may harm the person's body, but it typically doesn't go as far as causing death. This is because once a person dies, the demon can no longer possess their body and must find another host, which is troublesome for the demon. Perhaps this demon knew that Jesus intended to clarify an important truth through this child, so it sought to eliminate him first, depriving Jesus of the opportunity to explain the truth. If this was indeed the case, we should pay closer attention to their dialogue.

The father of the child said, "If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." We see that the father of the child was very humble; he knew he was unworthy, so he sought Jesus' mercy. However, on the other hand, he lacked sufficient faith in Jesus. Perhaps seeing that Jesus' disciples were unable to cast out the demon, he wasn't sure if the teacher would be any more successful. Therefore, before making his request to Jesus, he added, "If You can," expressing uncertainty about whether Jesus had the ability to help.

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

This is where Jesus brings out a very important truth. First, Jesus discerned the meaning behind the father's words and immediately responded to him based on his statement. The phrase "If you can believe" in the scripture does not contain the word "believe" in the original text. The original text simply says, "If you can." The father first asked Jesus, "If you can," and Jesus echoed this statement back to him, saying, "If you can." In other words, Jesus' response wasn't about whether He could or couldn't; the real question was whether the father could or couldn't.

Then Jesus proclaimed a fact: "All things are possible to him who believes." "All things" includes everything, of course, including casting out demons. Why is everything possible for the one who believes? Firstly, because there is nothing impossible for God, and belief is the channel through which we access God's power. When a person connects their faith to God's mighty power, they naturally become capable of all things. So, the real question is whether you can connect your faith to the source of God's power. Therefore, when the father asked Jesus, "If you can," Jesus' response was also "If you can," meaning if you can connect your faith to the source of God's power, then naturally, all things are possible.

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

The father of the child heard Jesus point out his problem, which perhaps was also the problem why Jesus' disciples couldn't cast out the demon: the issue wasn't with God's power but with the person's faith. After recognizing his own problem, the father immediately cried out with tears, expressing his regret and urgency. He cried out, saying, "I believe; help my unbelief!". "Help my unbelief" in Chinese Union Version isn't very accurate; it implies that his faith is insufficient and just needs a little more. However, the original text doesn't say "help my unbelief"; it actually means "I cannot believe." We are faced with a choice between belief and unbelief; if you don't fully believe, it essentially means you don't believe at all.

What should you do when you cannot believe? You should ask the Lord for help. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. Our faith begins with Jesus and ends with Jesus. Therefore, we should ask the Lord to increase our faith to a point where we can fully believe. When we bring our difficulties before God, asking Him for help and fully believing that He can and will do it, that's when God acts. Dear brothers and sisters, this is a very practical exercise for us. Many saints may have faced difficulties and prayed to God for years without seeing them resolved. But this passage clearly tells us, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." How should we apply such a promise from Jesus?

Firstly, are we 100% confident in the Lord's power? Secondly, are we 100% confident in the Lord's willingness? If the Lord is able and willing, then with such assurance, things will happen, just as the father of the child approached Jesus. The issue isn't with Jesus; it's with the father of the child.

Verse 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!'"

The crowd had gathered to witness the spectacle. Just moments ago, they were watching the debate between the disciples and the scribes, and now they were here to see Jesus cast out the demon. Jesus saw the crowd rushing toward them, so He

immediately rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you to come out of him and enter him no more." Jesus's command was clear and direct. Firstly, Jesus identified the spirit as a deaf and dumb spirit. The father of the child thought it was a mute spirit because the child couldn't speak, but Jesus knew the reason he couldn't speak was because he couldn't hear. The spirit attached to him was a deaf and dumb spirit. Jesus called out the spirit by name and commanded it to come out and never enter him again. This was a complete command. Often, after a demon is cast out, it gathers many companions and returns to inhabit the person, making the person's condition worse than before. Jesus commanded the spirit to come out and prohibited it from reentering.

Verse 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.'"

The spirit heard Jesus's command, causing the child to cry out loudly. The child convulsed violently for a while, and finally, the spirit came out. After the spirit came out, the child lay there motionless, appearing as if dead. Most of the crowd thought he was dead, showing a complete bystander mentality. They didn't pay attention to the feelings of the child's father at all. The crowd was not only blind but also heartless.

Many churches attract large crowds, but when Jesus was on earth, He deliberately avoided crowds while fulfilling His ministry. We must understand that the Gospel of Christ is not about mass movements; Jesus desires individuals to receive grace and salvation clearly so that they can join the church healthily and become part of the body of Christ. A sudden influx of crowds into the church is usually not a good thing; it can secularize the church and drain it of its life force.

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

We see that Jesus completely ignored the crowd. He reached out His hand, took hold of the child, and lifted him up, and the child stood up. Jesus didn't say a word to the crowd, nor did He respond to the scribes' questioning. Instead, He simply helped the person in need. This is also the attitude the church should have today.

Every seeker who comes to the church seeking help should be individually brought to the Lord Jesus, personally assisted in believing. After they are baptized, we should help them learn to read the Bible, pray, and live a normal church life, so their spiritual life can grow. This is the duty that God has given to the church.

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

After Jesus cast out the demon from the child, He went straight into the house, and His disciples followed Him inside. At this point, the scribes and the crowd remained outside the door because inside the house was where Jesus and His disciples could have intimate communication and fellowship together.

The disciples directly asked Jesus, "Why couldn't we cast out this demon?" Jesus straightforwardly told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer." Some manuscripts add "and fasting," meaning that this kind of demon cannot be cast out except by prayer and fasting. Prayer is about having fellowship with God, understanding His will completely, while fasting involves relinquishing one's legitimate rights to eat and drink. Prayer and fasting mean surrendering oneself completely to God, becoming a transparent conduit through which God's power can flow unhindered to reach those in need.

Jesus reminded His disciples that before casting out demons, they needed to pray, fast, and align themselves completely with God. Only then could they cast out this kind of demon. This particular kind of demon was specific because it harmed the child, even seeking to take the child's life. This means that this type of demon was

in complete opposition to Christ. If a person couldn't be completely unified with Christ, they wouldn't be able to cast out this kind of demon.

Verse 30: "Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it."

Jesus and His disciples embarking on their third travelling missionary journey; they travelled northward and arrived at the foot of Mount Hermon. Here, the disciples came to the realization that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Some of them accompanied Jesus up the mountain, where they witnessed His transfiguration, seeing the glory that He inherently possessed. After descending the mountain, they encountered a situation where they cast out a deaf and dumb spirit from a child. This event marked the completion of their third preaching journey.

After this event, they left that place, likely Caesarea Philippi, and began to journey southward, passing through Galilee. Throughout this journey, Jesus deliberately avoided drawing attention to Himself, despite the crowds who were inclined to follow Him and press around Him. Even though the crowds were fond of following and crowding around Jesus, He chose to intentionally evade them.

Verse 31: "For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.'"

This is the second time Jesus revealed to His disciples that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of men, would suffer many things, and ultimately be killed, but after His death, He would rise again on the third day. The disciples followed Jesus on three travelling preaching journeys, marking three stages of their discipleship training. Now, as these journeys come to an end, what lies ahead of them is what Jesus repeatedly told them: the Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men, will suffer many things, be killed, and rise again after three days.

Jesus emphasized this multiple times because He knew the disciples did not fully understand at that time.

Verse 32: "But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him."

The disciples, although they did not understand, Jesus repeatedly explained to them. In reality, it's the same for us today. The Bible contains many truths plainly laid out, yet we have many veils: religious veils, traditional veils, cultural veils, our own prideful veils, fleshly veils, and so on, to the extent that many times, we cannot see or comprehend. But God also repeatedly guides us, helping us remove these veils so that we can directly behold Jesus without obstruction. The training Jesus gave to His disciples is indeed the discipleship training for us today as well.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for placing the Gospel of Mark in our hands. Through Mark's account, we see how Jesus trained His disciples back then. And today, we are also in the school of Jesus Christ, receiving nurturing directly from Jesus. We also have the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us interpret the things we do not understand. Lord, grant me a humble heart, attentive ears, and a submissive will. Let us learn together to follow Jesus. We also acknowledge that there are many truths we struggle to believe. Lord, we ask for Your help, that through our lives, these truths may become experiential to us. Enable us to live lives that are in accordance with Your will. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.