

## **“Can Jesus?” (Mark 9:14–29)(6.27.21)**

Mark 9:14–29 (NIV84)

<sup>14</sup> When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

<sup>16</sup> “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

<sup>17</sup> A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup> 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.”

<sup>19</sup> “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.”

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. <sup>22</sup> “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.”

<sup>23</sup> “ ‘If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”

<sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, **“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”**

<sup>25</sup> 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.”

<sup>26</sup> The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

<sup>29</sup> He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

### **The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Can Jesus?”**

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus, James, John, and Simon Peter had been on the Mount of Transfiguration just hours before. They were rejoining the other disciples. There must have been some residual glow of the Transfiguration glory remaining on the Lord Jesus. There is no other explanation for the crowd being overwhelmed with wonder when they saw Him. And so, they eagerly ran towards the Messiah.

Imagine this scene. You have just had an amazing experience, a heavenly experience, with God. You received affirmation from the eternal Father. Peter was so affected that he suggested tents be constructed for them to stay on the mountaintop. But my friends, that isn’t the way of this life. We have to come down off that mountain and back into the valleys of everyday life.

There is a large noisy crowd. There is conflict between the other disciples and the Jewish religious teachers. There is a desperate father looking for Jesus. A poor boy who has suffered his whole life needs healing. The spiritual realm and the physical realm have come together to create a scene of confrontation.

While the Gospel of Mark is known to be the shortest and the most concise, when it comes to spiritual and demonic battles, he offers the most detail. We have the interwoven themes of faith, unbelief, and new life. Let us look at these themes and relate them to today.

BODY:

Apparently, the nine disciples had been waiting together for Jesus and the other three to come down from the mountaintop. We are not told where the crowd came from or why they were there. Clearly, the father of the demon possessed boy had come to receive a miraculous healing by Jesus. Most of the

crowd came to see Jesus; maybe to see the miracle worker; maybe to see the Messiah; maybe out of curiosity; maybe because everyone else was going.

Some, the teachers of the law, were there to keep tabs on what was happening. They were watching the crowd. They were watching Jesus. They were watching the disciples. Likely, they were pleased to see Jesus' disciples fail. By discrediting Jesus' disciples, they could discredit Jesus; or so they thought.

Do you profess Jesus as Lord and Savior? Are you a Christian? Are you His disciple? People are watching you. What they see can either honor Jesus or discredit Jesus. When we walk and talk like the world, we discredit Jesus. When we love sacrificially; when we are humble and meek; when we live holy lives – then we honor our God.

The disciples were not able to drive out the spirit that had robbed the boy of speech and his hearing. Certainly, they would have wanted to free this boy from his epileptic-like symptoms. This evil spirit kept captive this boy and was trying to kill him. In Mark, chapter 3, Jesus had sent out the disciples to preach and cast out demons. So, Jesus gave them the authority and they had exercised that authority in the past. Maybe their failure was because they felt the pressure of the crowd and the Pharisees. We will address the prayer question in a couple minutes.

Jesus asks what they are arguing about. Interestingly, it is the father that responds out of the whole crowd. Our text indicates that the disciples and the teachers of the law were the ones arguing, but the father answers. Of course, this burdened father has the most at stake. He had come looking for Jesus; looking for his son to be made new; to be who he was created to be.

Jesus responds, "O unbelieving generation." One school of thought thinks this comment is directed towards the disciples, but that doesn't seem consistent with the context. The most reasonable understanding is that Jesus is addressing everyone within hearing. Remember that Jesus has just come from a heavenly encounter and now has reentered our sinful and broken world. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, they record Jesus' words as "unbelieving and perverse generation." This fuller recounting, further supports that Jesus' address is to the whole crowd. AND...to every subsequent guilty generation of the wayward human race.

The meaning of perverse is much wider than I originally thought. I will give you one of the simplest definitions:

***perverse***

**1a:** turned away from what is right or good : [CORRUPT](#)

**b:** [IMPROPER](#), [INCORRECT](#)

**c:** contrary to the evidence or the direction of the judge on a point of law: *perverse* verdict

**2a:** obstinate in opposing what is right, reasonable, or accepted : [WRONGHEADED](#)

**b:** arising from or indicative of stubbornness or obstinacy

There can be no doubt that Jesus connected unbelief and sin. Jesus connected unbelief and misguided thinking. Certainly, misguided thinking leads to misguided actions. Also, more sin leads to less faith. It is a vicious downward spiral. When God brought the Hebrew people to The Promised Land the first time, they did not enter by faith. Because of their fear and doubt, that whole generation, except Joshua and Caleb, perished in the wilderness. Likewise today, lack of faith keeps us out of The Promised Land.

A few weeks ago, I told you that John Wesley said that all sin begins in unbelief. Did you doubt that claim? Well, here we have Jesus making that sure connection between unbelief and perverseness, unbelief and turning from what is right and good. Unbelief is corruption.

How would you like to learn about living by faith? Would you like a simple tool to separate you from sin and keep you walking in the Spirit of God? In the book, THE HOLY SPIRIT – The Key to Supernatural Living by Bill Bright, he gives us a tool to help ensure we live by faith and do not fall into unbelief.

**“Spiritual Breathing: Life-Changing Concept**

Spiritual Breathing is one of the most important truths of Scripture. The understanding and application of this vital concept has enriched my life as has no other truth. This concept of Spiritual Breathing has

been shared with millions of people through our literature program and with those who have been involved in our various student, lay and pastors' institutes of evangelism – always with revolutionary results.

As you walk in the Holy Spirit by faith, practicing Spiritual Breathing, you need never again live in spiritual defeat for more than a few minutes at a time. Spiritual Breathing, like physical breathing, is a process of exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure – an exercise in faith that enables you to experience God's love and forgiveness. This simple, scriptural process must be practiced by the Christian who wants to experience supernatural living.

The moment you invited Christ into your life as Savior and lord, you experienced a spiritual birth. You became a child of God, and you were filled with the Holy Spirit. God forgave all your sins – past, present and future, making you righteous, holy and acceptable in His sight. He did this because of Christ's sacrifice for you on the cross. You were given the power to live a holy life and to be a fruitful witness for God.

### **Roller Coaster Life**

But the average Christian does not understand this concept of Spiritual Breathing. As a result, he lives on a spiritual roller coaster. He goes from one emotional experience to another, living most of his life as a carnal Christian, trying without success to control his own life, experiencing frustration and fruitlessness as a result.

If this is your experience, Spiritual Breathing will enable you to get off this emotional roller coaster and to enjoy the supernatural life. Jesus promised the abundant Christian life when He said, "I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10b, NAS). As an exercise in faith, Spiritual Breathing will enable you to continue to experience God's love, forgiveness, power and control of the Holy Spirit as a supernatural way of life.

### **Exhale – Confess**

If you retake the throne, the control center, of your life through sin – a deliberate act of disobedience – breathe spiritually. *First, exhale by confession.* Remember, God's Word promises, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NAS). Confession (homologeō in the Greek) suggests agreement with God concerning our sins. Such agreement involves a least three considerations.

First, you must acknowledge that your sin or sins – which should be named to God specifically – are wrong and therefore are grievous to God.

Second, you acknowledge that God has already forgiven you through Christ's death on the cross for your sins.

Third, you repent, which means that you change your attitude, and this results in a change in your conduct. Instead of doing what your old sin-nature – your fleshly self – wants to do, you can now, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, do what God wants you to do.

### **Inhale – Appropriate by Faith**

Next, inhale by appropriating the fullness of God's Holy Spirit by faith. Trust Him now to control and empower you according to His command to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18, NAS). In its original meaning, this verse suggests that one is to be constantly and continually controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, moment by moment, as a way of life.

Furthermore, according to God's promise, He hears us and grants our request because we pray according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Continue to claim His love, forgiveness and power by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him, moment by moment.

Through the concept of Spiritual Breathing, God has provided you with a way to get off the spiritual roller coaster of spiritual highs and lows. You can cease to be a carnal Christian and start to live the rest of your life as a Spirit-filled Christian. If you are breathing spiritually – exhaling, confessing your sin, and inhaling, appropriating the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith – you are a Spirit-filled Christian.

## Attitude of Belief

The frustrating and fruitless defeat of living carnally is most often the result of unbelief. You may find yourself back on the spiritual roller coaster, with its ups and downs, from one emotional experience to another, if you develop an attitude of unbelief – when you cease to believe the promises of 1 John 1:9 and 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV84) No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Thousands of Christians around the world have shared similar experiences of how this concept of Spiritual Breathing has brought unusual blessing to their lives and, through them, to others.

As you exhale and inhale the moment you know that you have sinned, you will recognize greater freedom and power in your life. Simply keep short accounts with God. Do not allow your sins to accumulate.”

Back to our scripture. The boy is brought to Jesus. We should bring all the children to Jesus. When the spirit saw Jesus, it makes a final attempt to destroy the boy’s life. The father in hope against hope, says, **“But if you can do anything**, take pity on us and help us.” Jesus responds, “If you can?” Take a moment and hear all the baggage that Jesus’ question carries. There is a weight on Jesus’ heart. “Did this father really say to me, if you can?”

Yes, Jesus can. John 1:1–2 (NIV84) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Colossians 1:15–17 (NIV84) <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in that fiery furnace. Jesus turned water into the best wine. Jesus walked on the water. Jesus commanded the winds and the waves and they obeyed. Jesus healed. Jesus raised the dead to life. Lazarus was in the tomb for four days when Jesus beckoned him to life, “Lazarus, come out.” Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem as a king. Jesus fulfills prophecy.

Jesus conquered death and sin. 1 Corinthians 15:1–8 (NIV84) *The Resurrection of Christ*

**15** Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Yes, Jesus can. He demonstrates that to this father. Jesus demonstrates it to the boy. The crowd, the Pharisees, the disciples, they all see that Jesus can.

### CONCLUSION:

What about this issue of prayer? It is hard to imagine that the disciples had been casting out demons previously with invoking God’s name and power. Therefore, why would they not have prayed in this instance? It is not recorded that Jesus Prayed in this instance. In other cases, sometimes Jesus prayed before a miracle and other times He did not.

In today’s scripture, there is only one prayer given. It is the prayer of the beleaguered father.

Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, **“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”** There is a mixture of belief and unbelief. Many of us can likely identify with this man. The father responds rightly. He prays that he would have sufficient faith so that the son would be healed.

This is an important lesson for us to emulate. We should regularly pray that the Lord would enable us to overcome doubts and unbelief. Apparently, the father's prayer and level of faith were validated because Jesus healed the boy. This is consistent with Bill Bright's discipline of Spiritual Breathing: confessing your sin and petitioning God to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In my Logos Bible software, I have nearly 5,700 books. I searched this digital library for the phrase "help my unbelief." I was surprised by one of the results. Many letters from George Whitefield contained this request, this prayer, "Lord, help my unbelief." Whitefield was a great evangelist who preached all over Europe and colonial America. Thousands and thousands would come to hear him preach the word of God.

Yes, Jesus answered the father's prayer. In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us that faith is a gift of God. And in Matthew 7:11 (NIV84), Jesus tells us, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Not only was this boy's father given sufficient faith, he was given back his son. The deaf and mute spirit had imprisoned the boy and Jesus set him free. When the spirit was cast out and banished forever, the boy was like a corpse and many said, "He's dead." But, Jesus took the boy by the hand and raised him up.

Jesus does the same for each and every one of us. Every one of us is dead in our sins until we come to Jesus. When we come to Jesus and pray that He would be our Lord and Savior, He raises us up from death to life. How much faith does it take? The faith of a mustard seed will move mountains. Jesus wants to give you eternal life.

Is Jesus able? Can Jesus save you? In Jesus' own words, "Everything is possible for him who believes." Praise God and Amen. Let us pray.