

Jesus, The Healer Of Satan's Woes

Mark 9:14-29

Jesus performed many wondrous miracles during His earthly ministry. The gospel of Mark especially records His power against Satan and the demons. In fact, there are nine instances of Jesus casting out demons in this gospel. The episode we consider in this article occurred immediately after Jesus came back down from the Mount of Transfiguration, with Peter, James and John.

One of the important things we should understand about the miracles of Jesus is that they are not just to show His great power. It is true, they manifest His divinity, they give a divine stamp of approval to His teaching, and they work to increase the faith of God's people. But more than anything else, they do all these things by bringing the truth of the gospel and Christ's grace to a more glorious light. They are living and tangible pictures of the good news of salvation. This, particularly, is what we ought to look for in the miracles.

As Jesus approached the other nine disciples, there was a great disturbance, with the scribes heckling and jeering these disciples. The reason was the failure of the disciples to help a poor young lad, perhaps about 12 or 13 years old. He was possessed by an evil spirit, we are told, and this spirit had not only made him deaf and mute, but had tried to harm and destroy him by throwing him into water or fire. It seems that this lad had suffered these awful things since he was a little toddler.

The father of the boy had heard of the fame of Jesus, and had come hoping for deliverance, but the disciples could not cast out the foul demon. When the demon sees Jesus, he is filled with rage, and causes one of the terrible episodes of uncontrollable convulsions and foaming at the mouth. But Jesus calmly commands the demon to depart from the boy, and the demon departs, leaving the lad completely well.

While we obviously see the physical blessing that Christ brings to this lad and to his family, it is the wonderful spiritual meaning to which we ought to turn our attention. We see that this young boy is a spiritual picture of us. This young lad was completely under the power of the kingdom of darkness: this is each one of us by nature. Each and every human being, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, is by nature completely under the power and dominion of sin and Satan.

This lad had no ability to do anything, positively, for himself. He was in constant danger of destruction, yet being mute, he had no ability to cry out for help. Indeed he had no ability even to hear what others might say to him in warning or advice. How is this like us? We are not able by nature to do anything to help ourselves in our dreadful state of the bondage of sin. We cannot, and we will not, cry out to God for help, and we cannot hear the words of the gospel and grace (John 6:44, 8:43). Each of us needs a miracle from the hand of Jesus Christ.

We note too, the absolute malignant hatred of Satan and his demons. When first afflicted, this boy would have been a cute little toddler. Yet there is no mercy with Satan – he is not just a mischievous imp, as he is so wrongly portrayed in today's media. Here, we see that he desires to cause as much agony, harm, despair, and sorrow that he possibly can, to both the little boy and to his family. We hear that in the desperate cry of the father – “have compassion on us, and help us!” Satan is furiously angry against God and His Christ, and he seeks to devour and destroy whoever he can, as we learn from Revelation 12:17.

Our Lord emphasises the complete inability of the sinner to do anything to help himself. Indeed, Jesus emphasised that there was nothing in this world which could help at all in the bondage of sin and Satan. This is why He asks the father – “How long has the child had this demon?” This question was not necessary for Jesus to know the answer, but it was necessary for us to see that there is no help in man. This father had tried everything to help his son – nothing had worked. It seemed that sooner or later this poor lad's miserable life would be snuffed out by this demon.

But this young boy had not been destroyed. Why not? Because, in God's loving providence, he had an appointment to meet with Christ, and to be saved from his dreadful condition. So it is with us: Satan would dearly love to bring down into hell and destruction all that are on the earth, and especially those such as our covenant children. But our God preserves all that are His, until such time as He delivers them out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of His dear Son. This is the marvellous work of our Saviour – He will not lose even one of His sheep. He comes to them in their

helplessness and delivers completely.

This young boy was completely delivered. Usually after such convulsions as the demon caused, he would be unconscious for about an hour. But our Lord lifts him up and he is whole straight away. Despite years of being unable to hear or speak, perhaps even from before he began to speak properly, he can immediately hear and speak normally. When Jesus delivers us from the kingdom of darkness, He does so with power and completeness. Notice also the command of Jesus in verse 25 – “Enter no more into him.” We not only are delivered, but Satan may touch us no more, without the permission of God.

But there is more to this miracle. Jesus not only cared for the lad, but also for the father: and this is a picture for us too. The father says to Jesus: “If you can do anything...help us.” What a thing to say! This man stands before Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, the Creator of the world, and says: “IF you have ANY power!!”

Does this man have faith and hope? Yes – otherwise he wouldn’t plead for help. Does he have a strong faith, or a confident hope? No, he does not. He stands before the God of the universe, and he says to Him “If you have any power!” This is us, is it not? How weak we are so often in our faith – our Father is the Almighty, the creator and upholder of all things, who does all things according to the power of His will, and none can stay His hand. He cares for us in Christ Jesus His Son, whom He loves. Yet when we come before Him in prayer, or as we live our lives, we doubt, we despair, and we try to walk in our own strength instead of His.

The answer of Jesus is even more marked in the original. He says (verse 23): “If you have the power to believe, all things are powerfully able to be done for him that believes.” Jesus is saying to the father and to us: “It is not a matter of whether I have any power or ability – that is beyond question! All things are able to be done by me. What matters is whether you have the power of faith.”

The power of faith is ours by virtue of regeneration: being united to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, in our regeneration, by faith, engrafts us into Christ, and we have the power of His life flowing in us immediately. But there is a second aspect of faith – the activity of that faith. God calls us to take that gift of faith, and exercise it. If we exercise, we become stronger; if we do not, we become weaker. Christ says to him – if you have faith, then exercise that faith! Believe, and all things are possible for you. (Does this mean absolutely anything? No – true faith asks and expects that which is according to God’s will and for His glory).

What response does this cause in the man? “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” This is the confession of faith, but the confession of weakness of faith also, and the desire to be strengthened in faith by our Redeemer. This is the purpose of Christ also – to wake up this man in his faith and to strengthen that faith. Christ calls us to forsake ourselves, and to follow, trust and rest in His work, His power, His love, His person, for all of this life, nothing doubting. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 2:1). And our Saviour continues to use His word to speak to us, and to teach us, to do this more and more. This is to die more and more unto sin and to live more and more unto Christ’s righteousness.

And it was then that Christ healed his son – after the confession of his faith and trust in Christ. What wonderful confirmation of the power of Christ to save us, to give us faith, and to draw us to Himself for all things! And what rejoicing would there have been in that household that night! May we likewise rejoice in the deliverance that we have had from the power and terror of Satan and all his hateful demons! And rejoice in the person of Jesus Christ, and His Almighty power to save us from sin, and strengthen and keep us in all the ways of our life!

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The Evangelical Presbyterian, January 2011