

Belief Alone Does Not Save

The Gospel of Mark displays some excellent examples of belief. However, these examples help us understand that belief alone is not enough for salvation. Through Mark's recordings, we see the undeniable belief of the unclean spirits. Mark 1:23-24 reads, "There was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out saying, let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!" Mark furthers with, "And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out saying, You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11). Mark continues, "And he cried out with a loud voice and said, What Have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me" (Mark 5:7).

Additionally, Mark repeatedly records the power of Jesus over the unclean spirits—He gave authority to the apostles over the unclean spirits (Mark 6:7), He healed the young girl with the unclean spirit (Mark 7:25), and He cast out the unclean from a man's son (Mark 9:25). Reading of these accounts of the power of Jesus over the unclean spirits, it is no wonder the unclean spirits testified of Him. What the human eye could not see in the spiritual realm, these unclean spirits could and they revered Jesus as the Son of God.

Amazingly, the faith of these unclean spirits exceeded the faith of the apostles, disciples, and religious leaders. Jesus rebukes the absence and littleness of faith in the people who encounter Him, even those who were His closest followers (Mark 4:40). Many were wrong about who Jesus was (Mark 8:28). The disciples showed fear instead of faith and they often missed the point on occasions where faith would have made things clear.

In addition, the faith of the followers of Jesus did not benefit them. Perhaps James writes this point most directly. He states, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble” (James 2:19). These unclean spirits were working against Christ. However, their belief in knowing who Jesus was did not save them nor did it make them submissive to Him.

The belief, faith of the unclean spirits presents definitive proof of the identity of Jesus. The miracles, wonders, and signs performed by Jesus help the apostles and disciples ultimately figure out who Jesus is. Peter would preach this (Acts 2:22). John would write this (John 20:30-31). Reading about this in the Bible, countless men and women through since then have believed based on the record about Jesus that include His power over the spirit world. Mark presents these encounters to establish the fact confessed by Peter, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29, Matthew 16:16).

Application for us today is simple. Our faith must be much deeper than a mere belief. Remember, the demons believed and such was not enough to save them. God has provided us all that we need through His word that we may be thoroughly equipped to have a proper faith (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must each make the decision to exercise faith unto salvation through faithful obedience.