

The nature of this trust was known to the apostles, or well guessed at. They must have been seriously aware how much was at stake when they attempted to cure the boy. A multitude had collected. In that multitude were men of rank and character, whose hostile spirit was well known. The scene is not difficult to imagine. They used such formulas of healing as they had heard their Master use. To their surprise they failed. Repeated trials failed. All the methods they could think of failed. The evil spirit defied them; the multitude all the time watching and commenting. As it began clearly to appear that they were powerless, the Scribes began to question them. The questions are not reported. We can imagine what they were. They were practical: as to the claims of uneducated fishermen to work cures. They were sarcastic; taken up by the crowd, they were jeering. The nine were worried. Letting the man and his child go, they discussed. They could not cure, but they discuss cures. Their Master had done wonderful things. They had done them.

III. *Christ always manifests himself to protect his Church and to assert his power.*

It may be after delay. But he comes. Even as the questioning triumphantly proceeds, and the poor apostles are being made a miserable mockery by the Scribes and the crowd, lo, Christ! on the mountain-side with the three. From afar all see him. As he draws nearer, the glory in his face and his raiment, dazzles the beholders. The people are amazed and attracted. They hasten toward him. They run. The Scribes share the prevailing wonder and awe. So gentle and assuring was his bearing, so full of compassion, that the people came running and joyfully saluted him. The disciple might be denied; but the Master! who could deny him? They might be powerless; but what omnipotent majesty was resting upon him! Christianity had seemed to fail; but only its human exponents had failed. Christ had not failed. What a change came over those at the foot of the mount when Christ descended to them. The Scribes are confounded; they became silent. The apostles were cheered, as hard-pressed soldiers by the arrival of

their general and the main army. They surrounded Christ. The despairing father took heart. Surely so glorious a prophet could heal his son, if his followers had failed. Christ always manifests himself, having withdrawn himself for a time.

IV. *Parents should know the condition of their children.*

The description of his child by the father showed how carefully he had observed him. "How long time is it since this hath come to him?" Christ asked. "From a child," he replied. He had noticed the earliest hint of the possession. In the tender years of infancy the evidences had begun to show themselves. From its peculiar features, he knew that it was one of the worst cases—a malignant possession. Parents differ in their observation of the bodily health of their children. Yet of this most of us are watchful. We notice little defects in them in limb and feature. To a stranger no defect may be apparent; but a parent detects anything wrong in the voice, the step, the sight, the hearing, the breathing, the action of the heart, in an infant child. Wonderfully acute is the observation of many parents—of nearly every mother. And knowing of physical defects of maladies in our children, we are anxious to have them healed. If these are curable, we spare no expense in physicians. All that we can do, we do gladly. We have our children treated for incurable diseases; so anxious are we to exhaust all means that we may have them sound in body and in mind. What if we were as anxious for their souls; if we noticed defects in these—spiritual diseases, the evidence of Satanic possession?

V. *The difficulty in the way of healing is not want of power in God, but want of faith in man.*

This is the main truth in the narrative, a truth enforced in all the miracles and in so much of the Saviour's teaching. "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." This is the cry of the deeply-convicted man always; so impossible does it seem, in deep, intelligent conviction, that any power can save us. And to the man Jesus replies: "If thou canst." It is not a question whether I can work, but whether you can