

Mark 9:1-29 “The Ups and Downs of Life”

This week as we begin we really need to just briefly remember what we studied last week **as the first verse of chapter 9 really goes along with** what Jesus had been teaching His disciples.

If you remember Jesus and the disciples were on the road to Caesarea Philippi **and as they walked along the Lord asked the disciples two questions.** **First, He asked them who** do men say that I am? **And really in doing this** Jesus was asking the disciples what the word on the street was about who He was...**and if you remember they said some say** Elijah and others John the Baptist.

We could also ask the same question in our world today...and the answers people give about who Jesus is will vary greatly and we talked about how really the world today is just as confused about who Jesus is as the world was during the days Jesus walked the earth.

And then second Jesus asked the disciples “Who do you say that I am?” **and this was when Peter responded by simply saying you are the Christ...and this meant that Peter knew in his heart that Jesus was the promised Messiah,** the One who would come and rescue the Jewish people.

We then saw Jesus tell the disciples that they were to tell no one and we learned very quickly that the Messiah that the people of Israel wanted and expected was very far from who the scriptures said the Messiah would be.

The people wanted a conqueror and a liberator as their Messiah while Jesus revealed that He was going to suffer and die at the hands of men before rising again...and then Peter famously did something I bet he

wished he could have taken back as he actually tried to rebuke the Lord by saying these things would never take place...and the Lord rebuked Peter in front of everyone saying he was speaking on behalf of Satan.

Jesus also said that Peter had the kingdom of men in his mind rather than the kingdom of God and then Jesus spoke about the heart and attitude of someone that had a life that was being lived for the kingdom as He said that His disciples needed to lose their lives, take up their cross and follow Him and that if anyone wanted to gain their life then they must choose to lose it for His kingdom.

With that in mind we now come to verse 1 of chapter 9 where Jesus said **And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”** Not only did Jesus tell the disciples about His death and resurrection but now the Lord says that some of them would actually see the kingdom of God with their own eyes before they died.

I have to say this must have been a very confusing conversation for the disciples to partake of. They understand who Jesus is but the Lord as He is speaking to them is now challenging them in a dozen different ways.

In retrospect...after Jesus died and rose again they were probably found to be repeatedly saying “Oh that’s what Jesus meant when He said this” but in the here and now it was all a mystery.

Now I do find it interesting that in Matthew, Mark and Luke we have these very same words recorded and all three of them agree very

clearly with what will now take place in the Gospel of Mark in that Jesus is going to be transformed in front of the eyes of SOME of the disciples, not all the disciples will partake of this but SOME will see Jesus in His glory...and this portion of scripture is what you and I know as the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at this and see how it transpired if you look at verse 2 which says ²**Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.** Six days later we are told the Lord took just three of His disciples with Him and went up on a high mountain and this was probably Mt. Hermon which was actually over near the city of Caesarea Philippi where they were said to be going though there is some debate about this. If it was Mt. Hermon the highest peak of this mountain is some 9,000 feet above sea level.

We learn here that Peter, James and John were once again invited by Jesus to go on this special journey and it is interesting that these three seemed to be invited to join Jesus while the other disciples were not...We saw this when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus as well and we'll see it again as Jesus is in the garden asking the disciples to pray.

Why these three we just don't know...were they ones the Lord needed to keep closer for the fact that they would get in trouble without it...or was it that one day they would each be leaders of the church in a significant way.

So they head up the high mountain and as they were apart by themselves we are told that Jesus suddenly transformed before their eyes...and the word that is used here in Greek is the word metamorfoo

and means to be changed into another form...we might think of how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly as it transforms as an example.

You and I as believers in Jesus look forward to the day that we are transformed as well. Over in Philippians 3:20-21 we learn about this when the Word says ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. The word for transformed here in Philippians is different but it means to be conformed to or to have the same form as another.

The scriptures teach that one day we will have glorified bodies and here in our text that glorified body of Jesus was revealed to these disciples. We learn this over in John 17:5 of Jesus when it says ⁵And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. It's kind of amazing to think that Jesus before He came to this world was in glory with the Father even before the world was.

It's amazing to think that Jesus left the glory that He had with the Father and made Himself of no reputation becoming a man even humbling Himself to the death of the cross...that's what Philippians 2:5-8 speaks of and then in verses 9-11 of that same chapter we are told that God has highly exalted Jesus and His name is above every name and every knee will one day bow before Jesus and everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I can't wait for that day, the day the Lord makes His authority known in this world and can you just imagine the disciples seeing Jesus in this

glorified, exalted state...it is as if the glory of God just burst forth from Jesus.

Verse 3 describes in human terms what these three disciples saw when it says ³**His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.** That's some bright clothing indeed. You might notice it says that the clothing was LIKE snow meaning words couldn't describe the glory that radiated from Jesus...Over in Matthew 17:2 we are told that Jesus shined like the sun...so you can imagine Peter and James and John were breaking out their sunglasses for how bright Jesus was.

We are told the following over in the book of Revelation 22:3-5 as John spoke of the new heavens and the new earth we are told the following ³**And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.** ⁴**They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.** ⁵**There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.** The glory of the Lord shall shine in eternity and so bright shall His glory be that there will no lamp nor sun.

Look at verse 4 which says ⁴**And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.** Not only was Jesus present but then supernaturally Elijah and Moses showed up on the scene.

We might ask how did these men know who it was that was before them? Some suggest that in the heavenly scene we will know all we come in contact with.

Elijah is said to represent the prophets and Moses is said to represent the law of God and of course Jesus came to fulfill both of these...Some suggest that because these two are seen here in this setting that they will be the two witnesses that are spoken of in the book of Revelation and we'll discuss that briefly here in relation to Elijah in just a few minutes.

Look at verses 5-6 which say ⁵Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—⁶because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

Peter as usual says something that he probably shouldn't have said as he suggests three tabernacles would be built and Peter I think is saying "Lord I would rather not leave this place of glory and goodness."

In life I think you and I can be a little like Peter in that we enter into these very special and amazing spiritual times in our lives and we simply don't want them to end...For example this past Sunday we had baptisms and it was a glorious time in the Spirit...really the whole service was just this big blessing as the Lord was working in us in many ways...and we don't want those times to end but the reality is that we must come down the mountain...Life is full of spiritual mountains and valleys as we go through life...sadly in this world it seems there is more time spent in the valleys as it's simply a reality that we live in a fallen world.

One day though we'll enter the spiritual mountains of heaven and we'll never have to come back down but Peter here is just seen

holding on to what is transpiring and we are told here that Peter only said this because he was greatly afraid...So really this wasn't a good thing for Peter to suggest and we can see that Peter really just felt like he had to fill the space with some kind of words.

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt the need to say something even when you didn't really have anything to say? There is a saying that goes around that says **It is Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.** — and I think Peter had to learn that the hard way in his life.

As we come to verses 7 and 8 of our text it would seem to me that these three disciples were placing a very special emphasis on the fact that Moses and Elijah had showed up, like they were making a very big deal out of it and now the Father steps in and speaks to them saying this ⁷**And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"** ⁸**Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.**

The point the Father is making is that the Son is of far greater significance than Moses and Elijah would ever be. As the Father speaks it reveals to the disciples even further that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, that He is the One they should be seeking and listening to.

I think that's some pretty good advice for us that we should listen to the Son. There are an awful lot of voices in the world, there are all kinds of debates that people get into and even Christians can have their focus in the wrong place but at the end of the day all we need is Jesus.

And I think the disciples needed to hear this to help their focus to be in the right place as they went through life. The scribes and Pharisees focused on the wrong thing often, they were stuck on the law and the keeping of it, they were stuck on the man-made rules...and they taught the masses that to be religious they had to live as they did.

The Father is saying to these men that all they have need of is the Son and His words. Hebrews 1:1-3 says this of Jesus when it says **God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

How amazing that you and I get to see the words of Jesus right before our eyes, that we get to focus on the Son and live for His glory and that one day we will be with Him in glory.

And then as the disciples were hearing the Father's voice we are told that just as suddenly as this situation started it was over and the disciples were alone with Jesus.

Look at verses 9-10 which say **⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.**

Jesus once again tasks these three disciples with staying quiet about what they had witnessed until after He had risen from the dead...and you know as well as I do that when they came down the mountain the other disciples would have been asking what took place...and I can't hardly comprehend how difficult it would have been for these three to simply remain quiet about what had happened...I mean think about seeing Jesus in glory and seeing Elijah and Moses and hearing a voice from heaven and then being told not to say a word.

So down the mountain they come...they couldn't stay in that place of glory for there was more work to be done and we'll see shortly that while Jesus and the three were on the mountain that difficult things were transpiring that they would then step into. So true that often when we have those mountain top experiences with Jesus that trouble waits for us on the way down.

Look at verses 11-13 which say ¹¹And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

¹²Then He answered and told them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" ¹³But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him."

We talked about this last week and we won't spend too much time here but one of the ideas that the people had in their minds and hearts about the Messiah was that Elijah had to come first...and that comes from Malachi 4:5-6.

Jesus here makes it clear that He would suffer many things and be treated with contempt pointing forward to His death and torture on the cross...and then He says that Elijah has already come and they did to him what they wished.

That's kind of weird and we might ask what does that mean that Elijah will come and he has come...Well this is actually fulfilled in two ways...First understand that John the Baptist fulfilled this and the disciples understood that Jesus was speaking of him if you listen to this same account from Matthew 17:11-13 which says ¹¹**Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. ¹²But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” ¹³Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.**

Over in Matthew 11:13-14 we have further clarification that John the Baptist partially fulfilled what Malachi 4:5-6 speaks of about Elijah when it says ³**For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.**

So John the Baptist fulfilled this partially and then in the future Elijah will actually come once again in the flesh and I believe we'll see that when we come to the end times and you might just read Revelation 11 and take note of the two witnesses that are spoken of and it is heavily believed that Elijah will be one of these two witnesses completing the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6.

Ok so Jesus and the disciples are coming from an incredible place of spiritual blessing and they come down the mountain and Jesus is teaching them and then look at what happens in verses 14-16 which say ¹⁴ **And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.** ¹⁵ **Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him.** ¹⁶ **And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?"**

As Jesus returns there is a huge crowd that is gathered and there is a dispute taking place between the disciples and the scribes and I like it that when Jesus was around that suddenly nothing else really mattered.

I think that its very true that when Jesus shows up on the scene that everything else just kind of fades to the background. I love it when I am seeking to worship Jesus in my life and serve Him and as others are encountering Jesus as well that I get to head to the background...It's my hope that I become invisible and I think all of should have this hope in our hearts that Jesus would just be magnified in our presence and lifted on high.

I often pray this over our church that Jesus would be the One that gets all the glory and the honor, that when people come here that He is the focus of the services. A good ambition to have is what John the Baptist said as people were leaving him and instead following Jesus...In John 3:30 he simply said this ³⁰ **He must increase, but I must decrease.**

I sure hope when anyone comes into this building that the presence of Jesus is so strong that He and He alone is the focus of all of us...I hope

we have an amazement in our hearts that we get to know and serve Him and that we get to be in His presence.

So, Jesus the man with the answers has arrived on the scene and suddenly the disciples and the scribes don't seem so important and Jesus then asks them what it was that they were all arguing about.

Verses 17-18 say¹⁷ Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. ¹⁸ And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

A desperate father answers the question of Jesus saying that he had brought his son and this son has a demon that grabs him, throws him down, causing him to foam at the mouth, makes him gnash his teeth and causes him to become rigid...can you imagine being that parent?

I can't imagine watching your child suffer and having nothing that you can do about it. I know the grace of Jesus is sufficient and He gives peace beyond understanding and helps us through those difficult times but to be a father and to watch your son suffer seems an incredible difficulty.

And then to be that father and to hear that Jesus and the disciples are in town and to probably have heard that the disciples had even had success casting out demons would have given this man hope and so as he came seeking Jesus and didn't find him he probably thought well perhaps the disciples can set my little boy free.

And I'm not sure what the disciples attempted to do as they cast out the demon but whatever it was had failed...can you imagine being the

disciples? I mean not that long ago Jesus sent them out two by two into the surrounding villages to proclaim the coming kingdom and specifically gave them authority over demons and now they simply fail.

I can honestly say that sometimes failure in ministry sadly does take place. I have had times in my life where I thought the Lord said things to me and it just didn't pan out, I have had times in my life that I have failed as a pastor or I have failed as a dad...I've even had times that I prayed over someone believing for healing and it just didn't work out.

That can be a hard thing to pass through can't it? I will say though that the times of failure I have had in my life have probably taught me the most. I've learned that God is the authority and not me, He has lessons for me to learn and He wants me to become a better person.

Failure can be a hard thing, it can wreck our hearts and minds at times and it is during these times that we must teach ourselves to run to His Word and stand upon it. Sometimes when we fail our hearts condemn us and we must remind ourselves that for those in Christ Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation...we often must remind ourselves that in our failures there is forgiveness, there is hope, there is restoration, there is growth that takes place.

We must remind ourselves that Jesus is good and faithful and that the work He has started in us will be completed until the day of Christ Jesus.

The disciples had much to learn in their lives and we'll see there was a lesson for them even as they failed but let's move forward here if you look at verses 19-20 which say ¹⁹He 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.” ²⁰ Then 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.

I think we can learn here that there was some deficiency in the faith of the disciples, that they had missed something, that something was amiss perhaps in the way they approached this demon being cast out...and the Lord seems to almost criticize their faith as He simply asks how long He would be with this faithless generation?

The Lord then demanded that the son be brought to Him, and we can see here that even as the boy was brought that the demon went into an all-out rage throwing the boy into a convulsion and causing him to fall to the ground and foam at the mouth.

That would have been a scary thing to see I'm sure...I've said this before but I believe that when Jesus is moving in a person's heart that the enemy can see it and he goes into an all out assault on that individual...and here the enemy is just trying to intimidate the crowd I'm sure and perhaps the enemy is trying to intimidate Jesus and of course that won't work for Jesus is God Almighty in the flesh so the joke's on you Satan for Jesus is going to be the victor even in this situation.

May you and I learn to bring those who are suffering to Jesus, may that be our first response and not our last response, may He be the one we run to when life goes bonkers around us...So often Jesus is the last resort and I think we can lose an awful lot of time running to counsellors and pastors and brothers and sisters and then finally

when all that is done we run to Jesus...**That's the wrong order...**yes we need each other and we should lean on each other BUT Jesus must be the first line of help we run to.

I wonder what Jesus would say to you today about your faith? Would He say that you like the people in this narrative are a person that is a part of a faithless generation? I sure hope not...You and I who are here today have a great opportunity I believe to see the glory of Jesus as we study His word together and look to live for Him...I will just be honest with you that I believe Jesus wants to do a great work through this church as we mature in Him and look to honor Him and live for Him...May we not be a faithless generation but a generation that is found to be full of great faith.

As if things were not bad enough in this son's life we then see what takes place in verses 21-22 which say ²¹ **So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?"**

And he said, "From childhood. ²² 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."

In addition to all the other strange occurrences in this son's life this demon also caused him to be thrown into the fire or even be drowned. You get the idea that this child could not be alone, that he would do strange things that didn't make sense and you can imagine this father was just broken hearted about it.

And then notice there is almost a crying out from the father as he says to Jesus that if He can do anything would you please have compassion and help us...the cry of a father's heart...If you have ever

been the parent of a child that has just gone off the rails or they are self-harming or they are just doing things that don't make any sense then you know the state of this father's heart.

I suppose I would say that not every child that is doing odd things is demon possessed...and simply said if they are a believer in Jesus then we know that possession is no longer an option for the enemy...He can influence from the outside but can't come in as the Holy Spirit has sealed that believer.

So the boy's father says IF you can do something please do and then Jesus says this in verse 23 which says ²³ **Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."** Jesus in response simply says IF YOU CAN BELIEVE ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE...I don't think Jesus was rebuking the man but perhaps here in saying this Jesus was provoking within the heart of this man a deep yearning within his spirit for the Lord to do a work.

The reality is that Jesus CAN do anything...Jesus can take a man's ear that has been chopped off and make it good as new. He can make the legs of a man which have no strength to walk once again, he can make the mute speak, the blind see, the bleeding to stop...**Jesus CAN do anything.**

I believe the Father would have been better served to simply say Lord IF YOU ARE WILLING you can make my son whole again...and I think we should be that way as we go through life. The reality is that not everyone will be healed of the infirmities they face, not every trial will end the moment we pray...But Jesus can and does have the authority to end them as He sees fit.

And so the Lord I believe was lovingly challenging this father to simply think about who He is and you know I really do love the response of the father if you look at verse 24 **Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”**

The father confesses his faith in what Jesus can do...**and at the same time confesses that his faith fails him...**and I love this and honestly I think I have prayed this more often in my life in recent days. I believe Jesus can do anything He desires to do but so often my faith falls short and so I often pray Lord would you just graciously work in this situation, or lead in that situation even when my faith falls short.

The Lord you will see will heal this man's son...**and I'm so thankful that while I should have faith** that even when my faith falters at times the Lord is faithful to work and minister and help in my times of need.

Perhaps today this is a prayer that you need to adopt as some of you have some big situations in your lives you are working through **and you don't know how or when the Lord might work something out** and you are just barely hanging on...**to simply cry out Lord help me in my unbelief, help me in my struggles, help me in my weaknesses...**and you know I really believe that sometimes that is music to the Lord's ears...because it means we know we can't do it in our own strength or abilities...that we need His great help.

Look at verses 25-27 which say **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!”** 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.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

As the crowd gathered the Lord healed and as the evil spirit left the boy was left without strength which indicates there was an intense struggle for this son’s soul and body...he was totally exhausted...and the Lord went and lifted him up.

Look at verses 28-29 which say ²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

²⁹ So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

The disciples wanted to know why they couldn’t seem to find the victory over this spirit...and the Lord told them THIS KIND can come out only by prayer and fasting...and I think this indicates to us that in the demonic realm and the angelic realm for that matter that there are different ranks and hierarchies...apparently this demon was not your everyday demon that could just be commanded to come out...There needed to be much greater spiritual warfare being waged to find the victory.

I do think that there are times that we may be facing a great work of the enemy against us in life and we may simply need to be pressing into Jesus on a more regular basis. Sometimes we need to take extra time in the Word and extra time in the presence of Jesus and even fast from those things we love to seek His face in order to see the victory.

To just provide a closing thought today I want to just point out that Jesus will be with us as we go through life...He will be with us in the

mountain top experiences of life and He will be with us when we come to the valleys of life...Both of these experiences will take place...The Lord is faithful to always minister to us and help us...Even in the failures of life He desires to teach us and build us up...His love is sure, His authority is certain...we should trust that He can do all things and we should walk in that faith trusting that even when our faith lacks that He is so faithful to see us through.

Tonight if you need to receive Jesus in your heart for the forgiveness of your sins I would encourage you to grab me after the service as I would love to pray with you about it.

Mark 9:1-29 “With Us Through It All”

Cross References

Verse 2

Philippians 3:20-21

John 17:5

Verse 3

Revelation 22:3-5

Verses 7-8

Hebrews 1:1-3

Verses 11-13

Matthew 17:11-13

Matthew 11:13-14

Verses 14-16

John 3:30