

## Decisive Prayer

Mark 9:14-29

As we continue with our study in Mark we are picking up right after Jesus was up on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John just had this amazing experience where Jesus was transfigured right in front of them.

This was an absolutely life changing experience that Peter didn't want to leave from. I imagine many of us feel the same way when we get to experience these "spiritual high" moments. I can remember as a student not wanting to come home from summer camp when God had really shown up in my life.

I'm sure we can all recall a time like this in our own lives, but nothing would compare to seeing Jesus in his full glory, then coming back down the mountain into a frustrating situation.

We talk about this at camps, retreats, and conferences where we know that God is moving in a powerful way and our regular workaday life is waiting for us at home. We always say to be on guard for that. In today's passage we are going to see this play itself out. We are also going to see what happens when we are

not on guard when it comes to serving the Lord, the dangers of serving in the flesh, and how to be effective in serving the Lord

Please open your bibles with me to Mark chapter 9 as we continue in our study of Mark, we will be starting in verse 14

### I. Jesus on the scene v14-16

“And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

So here we see Jesus coming to the disciples, what we have here is the rest of the disciples because Peter, James, and John were obviously up with Jesus.

There is a crowd gathered and there is an argument. Nothing like jumping right back into a difficult situation after the transfiguration. Super spiritual high moment, super frustrating situation. There was with them a boy that had been, according to verse 17-18, possessed by a mute spirit that had been tormenting him for some time. The father brought the boy to the disciples to cast it out but they could not.

As I said earlier, in verse 5 Peter wanted to stay up on the mountain, and how sweet that would have been. To stay on this spiritual retreat. Jesus, however, knew what he was called to, and came back to be about the work of the ministry

This is a great reminder for us, to be about the work even though it would be easy to take a break. Spiritual retreats are good, rest is good, but when we spend so much time preparing and resting we can miss out on opportunities to minister to people.

Galatians 6:9 says **“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”**

We might be familiar with this passage, but if we look a verse prior it deals with something that the disciples seem to be struggling with. Galatians 6:8 says, **“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”**

We need to take care to make sure that our service, our sowing, is not done in the flesh. If we serve the Lord in the flesh it will

not go well for us. Think of the times in your own life that you have seen that happen. I can think of a number of times that I have served out of the flesh, whether it was for selfish gain or ambition, a desire to be seen, a desire to earn something, even the good thing that I did becomes worthless to me.

As Rich preached when we covered 2nd Corinthians these good things done with the wrong motive will be burned up at the bema seat judgment.

After the rapture of the church believers will go to the bema seat judgment. It is important to know that this is for believers only. The Bema Seat Judgment is where our works are judged and crowns are given. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Rich said “Those who stand before the Lord, innocent because of the free gift of Salvation, sins covered by the blood of the Lamb; Will have our works tested by fire to see whether they were done in the power of the Holy Spirit or done in the flesh.”

David Guzik notes that, “We won't be punished for what was not done rightly unto the Lord; those things will simply be burned up, and it will be as if we never did them. We will simply be rewarded for what remains. Sadly, some will get to heaven thinking they have done great things for God and will find out at the judgment seat of Christ that they really did nothing.”

It is important that when we serve the Lord we strive to do so with a pure heart and pure motivation to please the Lord and not men.

## II. The Disciples Failure Mark 9:17-18

**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.”**

As we move on in this story we see this dispute between the scribes and the remaining disciples. We aren't told directly what they were disputing. David Guzik says that they were probably criticizing the disciples for not being able to cast the demon out of the boy that had been brought.

We will get to the “why” of that later, but look at how the people respond to Jesus, they are amazed at his arrival. They ran to greet him. It is awesome to see that even in the midst of this dispute the people are excited to see Jesus and run to him.

As he asks what they were discussing, at first no one speaks up but this father of the boy that had this mute spirit that the disciples could not cast out.

Notice the disciples do not answer Jesus, but it is the father of what Luke mentions is his only son. John MacArthur said, “Here was a situation that the disciples had failed to handle, which led to their embarrassed silence.” We can all understand them not wanting to tell Jesus they had failed, especially considering his response to this.

### III. O Faithless Generation Mark 9:19-20

Let’s look at verses 19-20

**He 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.**

“O faithless generation” or in the NASB it says “O unbelieving generation.” Commentators acknowledge that this can be directed at the crowd, the scribes, the disciples, or all of the above.

This admonition would apply to each of them, but would apply the most to the disciples. John MacArthur says this, “His rebuke was harsh; Luke 9:41 adds that He also called them a “perverted generation” After all the time they had spent with Him, such a lack of trust was inexcusable.”

This is pointing to the fact that their inability to cast the demon out came down to a lack of trust in the power and authority that Jesus had given them. Earlier in Mark, chapter 6 verse 7, **“And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.”**

Warren Wiersbe says, “No wonder the Lord was grieved with them! How often he must be grieved with us when we fail to use the spiritual resources He has graciously given to His people!”

Remember a few weeks back Rich spoke about the authority we have because of our relationship with Jesus. He said that we have authority to be ambassadors for Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. NKJV**

With this He has blessed us with spiritual gifts that he intended for us to use. When we misuse them, or don't use them at all, I imagine that his frustration would be with us as well. He has given us these gifts, His word, and the Holy Spirit for our personal walk as well as to further the kingdom. We need to use these resources to the best of our ability. It is easy to pick on the disciples for their inability to cast this demon out, but what about us? Where do we struggle in our faith to do what God called? I can't share the gospel because I don't know what to say. I can't be bold at work because my co-workers might judge me. I can't kick this bad habit that I have because it's too hard. How often are we that faithless generation?

The next thing we need to see, as I stop stepping all over your toes this morning, is the response of the demon to Jesus. Look again at verse 20, When they brought the boy to Jesus, **“immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.”**

This spirit knew that Jesus had come and he wasn't happy about it.

James 2:19 **“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”**



#### IV. If you can believe Mark 9:21-27

Let's move to the response of the father. Look at verse 21-27

**So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 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." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" 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!" 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." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.**

I love when Jesus asks questions that he already knows the answers to. He asks the father to share the story of what was going on with his son to hear the father's pain and bear with him.

John MacArthur notes, "the father was not coming to an impersonal force but to a person. The healing miracles Christ

performed reveal the compassion of God and that He cares about human pain and suffering.”

1 Peter 5:7 reminds us of this. **“having cast all your anxiety (that is your cares and worries as well) on Him, because He cares about you.”**

John 16:33 **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

This father did not have peace at this point, he still had a son that was dealing with this spirit that was tormenting him. He asks Jesus “if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

Jesus’ response is less a question, and a surprised response. In the NASB he says, “If you can? All things are possible to him who believes.” In the desperation of the father he missed the fact that Jesus had done many signs and wonders at this point. He doubted Jesus power in this moment and Jesus gives him a reminder. Jesus has spoken about the power of faith. In Mark 5:34-36 when he healed the woman that had been bleeding

and merely touched his cloak, it was her faith that made her well.

John MacArthur point to a lesson Jesus is teaching, “The lesson that faith is essential to access the power of God applied to all the unbelieving crowd, the father, and the disciples, whose faith was weak and wavering.”

The father cries out immediately, not to help his son, not on behalf of his son, but to help his unbelief. He realized in the moment that he had wavered and cries out to Jesus.

Spurgeon says this, “While men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief; but, as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief.”

Doubts happen, but when we realize that we have wavered we should have the same response as the father, to cry out to Jesus for strength; to rely on him fully. To trust in him completely.

At this, Jesus rebukes the spirit to come out of the boy and after one last gasp it comes out leaving the boy seemingly dead. You can imagine that because this boy had been tormented for so

long that he was physically exhausted. Jesus comes over and helps him up and returns him to the father.

Jesus not only showed his power over this spirit, but he showed his compassion in how he dealt with the boy.

Now it's time to deal with the disciples.

#### V. Decisive Prayer Mark 9:28-29

Look at verses 28-29

**“And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”**

Now we get to deal with the “why” that I mentioned earlier. The disciples ask why as they are unaware of their own spiritual condition. In doing this miracle Jesus not only met the need of a family struggling with a real physical need, but he taught the disciples a valuable lesson that we need to hear as well.

Warren Wiersbe says, “The main lesson of this miracle is the power of faith to overcome the enemy...Why had the disciples

failed? Because they had been careless in their personal spiritual walk and had neglected prayer and fasting.”

It isn't that you get superpowers when you pray or fast, but taking care of your spiritual walk prepares you for the battles that you face.

This is where Rich warned us in Mark 8 to not show up for battle in our PJ's.

Jesus does tell the disciples that this kind of spirit could only come out by prayer and fasting. What this indicates is that there are different types of spirits and that this one in particular was a tougher one.

This type of work the disciples needed to do meant that they needed to be prayed up and ready, but not just once they encountered the spirit, they needed to be in a lifestyle of prayer.

David Jeremiah said this, “Complacency is the enemy of spiritual power, and prayer is the discipline that reminds believers of their dependency.”

Complacency.... It is a dangerous thing. It's cousin might be "comfortability." It is easy to get comfortable in our walk with Christ. To think that we don't need to be working so hard.

David Guzik warns "This total dependence on God is the remedy for many spiritual problems. To be disappointed in yourself is to have trusted in yourself."

So for us, what is the takeaway? How often do we struggle with our own faith? How often do we even strive to do something for the kingdom that doesn't seem to work out?

For us the reminder is to have a lifestyle of prayer. A lifestyle of total dependence on God. If God has called you to something, do that and walk in the authority that God has given you. But do not take the work lightly. It is important for us to be ready to deal with an enemy that wants to see us fail.