

Mark 9:14-29

“Be Prepared”

As we slide into this particular section of scripture here in Mark Ch 9 you recall that Peter, James, and John have just had their minds blown by beholding with their eyes the glorified Christ. They went up on a high Mt together with Jesus whereby they were going to spend some time with Him as He prayed. and While He was praying He was transfigured *before* them, light began to shine forth *from* him, and Moses and Elijah appeared *to* Him and they were speaking *with* Him about what He was preparing to accomplish at Jerusalem through His death and resurrection. and As you might imagine these boys were freaking out!

Peter, not knowing what to say (rather than just saying nothing which would've been the preferred route to take) said, “Rabbi, this is awesome! We should just stay here and build 3 tabernacles, 1 for You, 1 for Moses, and 1 for Elijah.” and Just as he was speaking a cloud enveloped them and the Father spoke out of it *to* them and said, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” “Don’t place Moses, or Elijah on par with My Son,” we don’t serve Moses, we don’t worship Elijah, it’s not about the law and the prophets it’s about Christ. We worship Him, listen *to* and obey *Him*, the fullness of the law and the prophets culminate and are fulfilled in *Him*, we’re to hear *Him*.

It’s true that right now all kinds of candidates want you to hear them on all kinds of issues. and We do well to be educated concerning their true position, not just what they’re willing to say on television, but what does the record show and state concerning them? Because what they have to say will impact you presently, temporarily, be it for better or for worse. So it’s important to hear them, but believe me when I tell that that hearing them *pales* in comparison to your need, my need to hear *Him*. To hear Christ; because what they say and who they are might impact me presently, but what Christ has said, and who *He is* will impact me eternally.

Peter was like, “Man this is where it’s at! I don’t ever want to leave this place of abiding in the presence of the glory of Christ.” and We can’t blame Him for that, being on the mountain top with Christ is an incredible, incomparable experience, how could it ever be adequately articulated, how could anything ever compare to being in the presence of our glorified Lord? But there was a problem with Peter’s position and that was this; it’s seems all fine and well to hang out in our little bubble of problem free, worry free life in the presence of the glory of the Lord. When the Lord blesses us with that sense of the presence of His glory, nothing can compare, we don’t want to leave it, we forget about our problems, our pain, and just abide in His peace. The problem is that there’s a whole world of people out there who aren’t up on that Mt with you. They’ve got problems, they’re in pain, they’re hurting emotionally, they’re dead spiritually and *they need* what *you have*; a personal relationship with Jesus Christ They need Jesus to be there *for* them and minister *to* them just like He’s been there *for* and ministered *to* you. So hear me on this. The overflow of our time spent in God’s *presence* shouldn’t be to *isolate* us so as to make us never want to leave, but rather to *motivate* us to get off the mountain so as to minister *to* and be there *for* (that is to serve) *people*.

If you're spending time with the Lord, the natural overflow of that will be displayed in compassion *for* and ministry in some way *to* people. How can I say that? Because from beginning to end the bible displays for us that God is all about people. The entire mission of Christ if it demonstrates *anything* it's that God loves mankind, wants to reveal Himself in a personal way *to* mankind and is reaching out and willing to *reconcile* mankind to Himself through the person of His Son.

So, if God is about people, and He dwells in you, what do you think the fingerprints of His activity in your life will reflect? Jesus said, "I didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to (what) give..." How are you serving the Lord? In what way do you give of yourself to the Lord?

Last week Aaron was teaching there in James Ch 2. and We learned there, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" James 2:26 Or another way to understand that; the spirit of faith is works, is serving, somehow and in some way, in some capacity you will serve the Lord in serving others.

So as much as we'd like to hang out on the Mt, there's work to be done in the valley, and with that we fall now into Vs 14.

Vs14-18

You get the idea don't you? Jesus came off the Mt with Peter, James and John and the walked right into a Satanic scene; disappointed/discouraged and defeated disciples, disputing scribes, a disheartened, downcast and disillusioned father and a demon possessed boy. and Peter was probably thinking, "This is exactly why I wanted to stay up there!" But Jesus will silence the scribes, comfort the father, deliver the demon possessed boy and indoctrinate His disciples all in the next few minutes!

Jesus comes down from the Mt and He sees some obvious dissention, there's a discussion or more accurately a dispute going on between His disciples and some scribes. and I would imagine that the dispute revolved around this demon possessed boy and the fact that the disciples couldn't deliver him. and Somehow they were seeking to discredit them and more importantly they were no doubt seeking to find fault with Jesus due to the inability of His disciples. Which is a common problem by the way, so often people seek to find fault with Jesus due to the inability, or a particular failure of one or more of His followers. and It's a shame no doubt to see His followers fail, (we all do from time to time) but one thing that this passage definitely demonstrates to us is that even though His disciples may fail you from time to time, Jesus never will. Don't find fault with Jesus because one of His followers have failed, people will let you down, I want to do my very best for you, but inevitably I will fail you at some point in some way. Jesus never will.

Of course we have to kind of wonder why the scribes (if they were all that they purported to be) rather than criticizing the disciples didn't just cast the demon out themselves?

Be that as it may Jesus happened upon the scene, all the people saw Him, were blessed by the timely arrival of Him and ran to greet Him. and He promptly came to the defense of His disciples, "What are you discussing with them? You have questions talk to Me?" I love the fact that Jesus is our defense, our strong tower, our shield and our fortress. When we're being overwhelmed or overran Jesus is right there to take us in and be that shield about us. The proverbs tell us, "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.*"

Prov 18:10 and I'll guarantee you that right now those disciples are running *to* and taking refuge *in* the strong tower of the Lord, "Thank You Jesus for showing up when You did." and We'd expect nothing less from the Lord, He always has perfect timing.

Jesus says, "What are you guys discussing with them?"

and I don't know if they didn't have a chance to respond, or maybe there was a bit of awkward silence, but then we read beginning in Vs 17.

Vs17-18

and Really what a sad situation, that someone came to Jesus' disciples for help in time of need, but they were unable to be there for them in the capacity that they had need of. Now here's what I want you to see; Peter, James and John had the opportunity to see the glory *of* Christ on the Mt, but the other 9 disciples had the opportunity to *bring* glory *to* Christ in the valley below but they weren't ready when the opportunity presented itself.

Because what we're going to discover is that the problem wasn't with Jesus (it never is) it was with the disciples. We're going to find out that they weren't spiritually poised and prepared when opportunity struck. and We don't know why exactly, maybe they were a little frustrated with the fact that Jesus always picked the same 3 guys for seemingly special inside information. Maybe they thought, "Why do they always get to go with Him, how come they're always receiving special revelation from Him, why doesn't He use *me* in that capacity?" I'm not sure but for some reason they allowed themselves to be distracted and when the opportunity came for them to be used of God in an amazing and miraculous way they weren't ready, they were prepared and they failed. Sure those 3 saw Christ glorified, but they could've glorified Christ had they simply been prepared never knowing when that one chance might come to be there for someone in the name of Jesus in a powerful and personal way...but they missed it.

I wonder how many times we miss opportunity to be used of God to glorify Christ because we're too distracted by what God's doing in someone else's life to see what He wants to do in ours. We're focused on why *they* get to be used that way, *they* seem to get all the inside information, the special revelations, and God brings us an opportunity to be used powerfully, and personally in His name and we miss it, we were unprepared, to consumed with other things.

There's something else here that I believe is important to see as well. There was no problem with this man coming to Jesus' disciples to seek this miraculous deliverance of his son. Because back in Ch 6 Jesus had given them authority over unclean spirits; so we say, "Pre`tell, what's the deal there?" Jesus gave them the authority, He told them they could do it, yet they couldn't do it...Now, it's true (so it seems) that there are various rankings of demonic forces. The bible alludes to the fact that there are powers, principalities, rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness, and evidently this was a particularly nasty entity, this demonic presence wasn't going anywhere with out a fight. Was his authority simply greater than that which the disciples were able to offer? Was God's word simply failing them at this point? No, listen; remember we just mentioned the fact that the problem wasn't with Jesus it was with them. God's word didn't fail them, they're failing God's word. Anytime Jesus gives us a promise, or grants us resources spiritually, gives us a measure of authority and yet something doesn't seem to fall in line for us accordingly it's not *His* fault it doesn't come into fruition, it's ours.

The problem is never on His end, it's always on ours. So that when something isn't coming together for us in a manner that seems to be parallel to the word (God is all about

reconciliation yet my marriage is falling apart), the problem isn't with God, or His word, or His ability to do what He said He would do. The problem is with me, or perhaps (in the case of a marital issue) your spouse, most probably both parties to a degree. But here's the point; the problem of deliverance, or the problem of performance *never* lies with the Lord, (as Jesus will promptly demonstrate) the problem will *always* be found in us. We're not prayed up, we're not in the word, we're not willing to die to self, or we're seeking to safeguard some sin in our lives. Listen, let's not blame the Lord when *we're* the ones with the problem. "Well this whole 'Jesus' thing evidently isn't working out for me, I tried Jesus and it didn't work." What you mean is, "I don't want to die to self, I want to wallow around (unencumbered by guilt) in the mire of my sin, so I'm not going to follow Christ." The problem is *never* with Jesus; it's *always* with us, it's never on God's end, it's to be found on our end.

Now that doesn't mean that whenever something is going wrong in your life that you have a problem, there's spiritual warfare, fallen humanity and whole host of things that can factor in. But with in the context of "Jesus, You said, but it's not happening" that's not His problem, He's done His part, we're the one's with whom fault will be found. (and Jesus will point out their problem in just a minute)

One other thing then we'll move on, we note that the symptoms of this boy's possession present themselves like epilepsy. He seizes, locks his jaw, foams at the mouth and becomes rigid. Does that mean that people with epilepsy are demon possessed? No, the bible is careful to distinguish the 2, however is it possible that some people who are simply diagnosed with epilepsy, or, perhaps a mental instability *could be* demon possessed? Absolutely.

Vs 19-20

Few things here briefly; #1 Jesus gives to us the characteristic cause of all spiritual failure right there in Vs 19, did you catch it? "O *faithless* generation," What's the characteristic cause of all spiritual failure? "Unbelief" these guys couldn't minister to this man's need because for some reason (of which Jesus will narrow it down for us in a bit) their faith failed, they weren't looking *to* and trusting *in* the Lord. They were seeking to do in the efforts of the flesh what can only be done by the power of the Spirit. You cannot minister in an effective manner to the needs of a person's life (that is you can not reflect to someone, showing *to* them and sharing *with* them the Lord) in the efforts of the flesh, true ministry takes place in the power of the Spirit, relying *on* and trusting *in* not your own resources, but the Lord's.

2^{ndly} we note what the Lord says at the end of Vs 19, words of comfort, of reassurance, of solidity in what seems to be an otherwise volatile environment, "Bring him *to Me*." and You guys that's the key regarding anyone we see, anyone we know who is under the power of the enemy, who is bound by sin, hasn't been set free *by* Christ, we need to bring them *to* Christ. "How do we do that?" Bring them before the Lord in prayer, day after day, after week, after month, after year, just keeping taking them to the Lord in your prayer life. Intercede *for* them, stand in the gap on behalf *of* them. But be prepared, because odds are (and this is the 3rd thing we note here in Vs 20) things will probably get worse for them before they get better, did you note that there?

They brought him to Jesus and as he approached, he began to convulse, he fell to the ground and wallowed, began foaming at the mouth. Now, the father may've felt like, "Wait a minute Jesus; I thought that by bringing him to You things would get better, but things are

getting worse!” and I’m just going to tell you we see that sorta thing happen all the time, you start praying for someone because you’re concerned for them, want to see them made whole in Christ and you’re looking for a ray of sunshine to breakthrough in their otherwise dark life but instead things seem to get worse. Why is that? Because before the enemy simply had him/her enslaved, but now the war has begun, you’re seeking to see this captive set free through the power of prayer, the enemy doesn’t like that. and When he feels like his time is limited he will retaliate with a vengeance; it’s like when the 10 second clicker sounds toward the end of the fight and so both opponents just go all out try to get as many blows in as they can before the time is up.

It’s called spiritual warfare, don’t be surprised to see people’s lives get worse before they get better as you’re praying for them, taking them to Jesus, and don’t encourage them to just hang in there when they do. Encourage them to know that you don’t know *how* they can cope apart from Christ, point them to Jesus, take them to Him.

Vs 21-23

I want you to notice that when the demon convulsed the boy that Jesus didn’t whip Himself up into a Pentecostal fervor, He didn’t start getting loud and all emotional, He stayed quite composed and simply to the boy’s father, “How long has this been happening to him?” and He said, “From childhood.”

and Luke’s gospel informs us that this is the man’s only child, and this boy has been tormented from childhood. and Anyone with kids knows that you’d rather take a beating than see your child hurting, the pain that this man has gone through even on behalf of his child is something few could even comprehend. and It disturbs us to think of the demonic terrorizing children but I’m going to tell you that the enemy couldn’t care less about your child, or your children. He’s not sitting back telling his demonic cohorts, “Hey, they’re just innocent children, don’t damage them, they don’t understand.” You need to know that he wants to destroy your children that you might wage wise warfare on their behalf. and Rather than go easy on kids because of their inability to comprehend he will capitalize on it, take advantage of it. and Again that’s why it’s so important that you walk closely with Christ, so that there might be that hedge around your home whereby the Lord will limit the enemy and what he can do to you and/or your kids. There’s an interesting Vs there in 1 Cor 7 that speaks to a situation whereby 2 people are married and only 1 of 2 is a believer and it says, *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; (Check it out) otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.”* 1 Cor 7:14 There is a benefit (mom/dad) a blessing that is bestowed to your children as long as you’re walking with Christ, but if you’re not walking with Christ, there’s no guarantee for them either (heavy huh?)

2 Things we want to note about Vs 22, #1 we notice that the father understood (and we do well to understand the same) that the agenda of the enemy concerning his son (or for that matter anyone on the planet) was *to destroy him*. Now the *effort* may come in various forms, both fire and water (it may be drugs, alcohol, illicit relationships, the distracting cares of this world, greed, the pursuit of riches or material things) but the *agenda* is always the same, to *destroy* you. That’s the agenda of our enemy; of Satan and his demonic forces, mark it well he wants to destroy your life. Remember what Jesus said? He said, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they*

may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10 and We’ll see that play out as this begins to draw to a close, the enemy is trying to destroy his life, Jesus is going to give him wholeness of life, a new life, a new beginning, a fresh start.

The 2nd thing we need to see here is the question in the father’s heart... “*If You can do anything*, have compassion on us and help us.” What does that indicate to us? He’s doubting the Lord, “If You can.” Now it’s not a sinister doubt, it’s a seriously uncertain yet desperate doubt; and the indication would seem to be that the disciple’s *inability* to cast out the demon has shaken his confidence in the Lord’s *ability*. The disciple’s failure, faltered his faith and created a certain uncertainty in him regarding Jesus. “Your disciples couldn’t help, *if You can*, please have compassion on us and help us.” Does our witness impact people’s lives and shape their perspective concerning Christ? You bet it does. God help us to be prepared for those opportunities that come along, that we might walk in a consistent reflection of the reality of who He is.

Vs23

Don’t miss this. Jesus acknowledged that there was a big “if” in the equation. But it wasn’t on *His* end, the “if” wasn’t in Him, it was in the father, the boy’s dad. “It’s not whether I can *bless or benefit*” Jesus is saying, “It’s whether or not you can *believe*.” Remember the characteristic cause of all spiritual failure? Unbelief. Here Jesus underscores that again.

“It’s not about *My* ability, it’s about your *believing*.” and He says, “...all things are possible to him who believes.” Now, I want to take just a second here and address that phrase because it’s been grossly misused and abused. There is context that qualifies that promise. Jesus isn’t signing a blank spiritual check and saying fill in the amount with your faith and it’ll come to pass. As though faith is a mystical, almost magical essence that if enough of it is sprinkled over the occasion like pixie dust my wish is God’s command, as though I’m the sovereign and He’s the servant. That’s not what Jesus is saying at all. You can believe all you want that you can defy gravity but you’re not going to float out of this room by faith. The context is qualified by the *word* of God, and the *will* of God. and Jesus is saying, “Don’t set human limitations on an infinite omnipotent God, for what’s impossible with man *is* possible with God.” Faith and presumption are to totally different things, faith believes the word of God and acts on it. Presumption simply takes a course of action for granted that may or may not have *any* bearing on the word or the ways of God. We’re not to presume upon the Lord, but we’re to trust in Him with all our heart, and lean not on our own understanding. Faith will not set a limit of God’s power and *will* submit itself to God’s word, God’s will and God’s ways.

Vs24

Luke’s gospel tells us the man was on his knees at this point. and It’s difficult for us to read this and not have a chord of compassion struck in our hearts. Because this is a reality we can *all* identify with, we believe the Lord, but we wrestle with honest doubt. and We realize that Jesus rejected sinister doubt, a denial of God’s power, but He was always compassionate toward honest doubt. This man wasn’t denying God’s power, he desired it, yet he was being boldly transparent. “Lord I believe or I wouldn’t be here, but I have some real struggles with this, would You please help me?” and Notice the Lord didn’t rebuke Him, He blessed him, did a work on behalf *of* him. Because we all find ourselves in that place of recognizing our need to trust Him more, and we want it, and He knows that. In Luke’s gospel we read, “...*the apostles*

said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'” Luke 17:5 That’s what this man is saying, “Lord, increase my faith.” and That’s what we all echo, “Lord, increase our faith.”

Vs 25

Evidently Jesus had with drawn with the man from the crowd to speak to him personally and when He saw the people coming back around He went ahead and dealt with the demonic entity. and We note that Jesus said, “Enter him no more!” Why? Because Jesus told us that when a demonic spirit leaves a body (a host if you will) that it goes through many dry places and finding no rest it returns with 7 more spirits more wicked than himself so that the last state is worse than the 1st. and So Jesus says, “That’s not going to happen here, get out of here and don’t come back.”

Vs26-27

What a perfect picture of the work of Jesus in each of our lives. We’re entangled in the snares and under the sway of the wicked one, we’re as dead, dead in sin and trespasses. But Jesus takes us, lifts us up and gives us life. A life that’s whole, restored, back in its proper order, He gives us a new beginning. Maybe that’s where you’re at today, your life has been take and twisted by the enemy but today Jesus wants to give you a new beginning. The people said, “He’s dead” but when Jesus grabbed hold of his life (notice) “he arose.” Or another way to understand that? Jesus imparts resurrection power unto us, dead in sin, now alive in Christ.

Vs 28-29

We’ve talked about the epidemic of unbelief; here Jesus places His finger on their specific problem.

Why weren’t they prepared, why weren’t they empowered? They had faltered in intimate fellowship with the Father. In the earliest manuscripts the words “and fasting” don’t exist. They may or may not have been said, either way it doesn’t change the emphasis. If we’re to walk in the power of God we’ve got to maintain intimate communion *with* God. The bottom line is that they were powerless because they were prayerless. If you’re to have a spiritual life that is *powerful*, you need to have a spiritual life that is *prayerful*.

and It’s too late when the opportunity is upon you, you need to be prayed up in advance, you need to be walking consistently with the Lord, there needs to be a constancy about my relationship with the Lord. Remember what Jesus had been doing upon that Mt the night before? Praying, He was prepared when the opportunity was upon Him.

3 of the disciples seen the glory of the Lord, 9 of them could’ve brought glory to the Lord, they were too busy focusing *on* and being distracted *by* what God was doing in other people’s lives, they weren’t tuned in to what God wanted to do in *their* lives, they weren’t ready. What about you? Are you distracted, maybe feeling sorry for yourself because of where you’re *not*? Or are you spending time *with* the Lord, in prayer *before* the Lord, ready to move in the power of the Lord that you might bring glory to the Lord when the opportunity presents itself; be it later today, or next week, or in 2 yrs?

Last thought; the disciples let that man down, Jesus did not. Sometimes Jesus’ disciples will fail you, don’t let that cause your faith to falter concerning Christ, because Jesus will *never* fail you. He will always be there *for* you and ready to minister *to* you in your hour of need, it’s only yours to believe...

Prayer Points:

Lord we thank You for reassuring our hearts of Your faithfulness, of Your goodness, and of Your grace. and Help us to learn from Your word; that we might spend more *time* with You, developing *intimacy* with You through prayer, the denial of ourselves and submission to Your desire for our lives. and Lord we recognize that there are times when we fail You, but we want so desperately to be an accurate reflection *of* You, increase our faith, that we not be unbelieving, but believing. Trusting You, acting on Your word, bringing glory to Your name.

If God is dealing with you, you've been in the enemy's grip but today is the day of your deliverance and God is encouraging you to open your heart, then let me encourage you that you not *resist* Him, but that you *receive* Him. Oh, I'm not saying that you've been living in purposed rebellion against Christ (though maybe you have), but you've never made a conscious decision to receive Him, do it today. Let Him take you, and lift you up, and give you life.