



THE GOSPEL OF

**MARK**



## Sermon Series Notes

### “A Parent’s Need to Grow in Faith” (Mark 9:14-29)

Danny Hodges - NT3688 Topic: Spiritual Growth

Intro: One of the best pastors and leaders conference workshops I ever attended was led by Pastor Alistair Begg, and it was on preparing sermons. One gold nugget I took away from that workshop was him saying something like, “The text will tell you what to say, you just have to determined how to say it.” That’s some of the best advice that could ever be given to those who preach and teach the Bible. So I have labored to discover what the text before us today has to say to us, and I have asked the Lord to help me on how to say it.

Read Mark 9:14-29.

If you were here, Pastor Art Dykstra taught last weekend on the previous verses, the Mt. of Transfiguration. It was a good word.

Peter wanted to stay on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Who wouldn’t? What’s the most glorious experience you’ve ever had (ask people in the audience). Don’t you wish you could just stay there? Some want to find a Mt. of Transfiguration, build a house, and live there; See John Piper on this subject.

But there is a valley full of need. And one of those needs is the subject of our text, a father’s son who is possessed by an evil spirit. Luke’s account tells us that this was his only child (Luke 9:38). Can you imagine? We are not told the son’s age, but he is not a child any longer (note v.21). Is he a teenager, college age, older? We do not know, but for years this father has not been able to find help for his son. He now comes to Jesus’ disciples, but even they are not able to help him.

We could talk about demon possession and the power available through faith in Jesus to set people free. It is an important subject, but I do not believe it is the main subject of the text. It is quite interesting to me that these disciples are not able to drive this demon out. They ask Jesus why they were not able to do so, and he says that this kind can come out only by prayer. You may have a note at the bottom of the page in your Bible that says “some manuscripts prayer & fasting.” Either way, the implication is that these disciples could have cast the demon out, had they been more “prayed up,” spiritually mature, or spiritually prepared.

Spiritual warfare can be very mysterious. For example, see Daniel 10:10-13; I Thess.2:17-18.

So, Jesus seems to imply that these disciples could have cast the demon out, had they been either more mature in faith, or better prepared for the battle.

Here is a brief summary of the message I had pretty much prepared from this passage, yet never felt confident was complete.

Some practical reminders about faith:

- Faith is progressive
  - Jesus in the boat asleep, up on the mountain while the disciples in the storm, Peter walking on water.
- Faith is a gift (Acts 3:16; I Cor.12:9)
- Faith is an act of the will
- Faith is not a means of getting whatever we ask for
  - Verse 23 is challenging for me. Verses like these make it appear that if I just had enough faith, I could get anything I desire accomplished. But we know in the context of Scripture that is not true (I John 3:21-22; 5:14-15).

Essentials for increased faith:

- Prayer, especially asking God to increase our faith
- The Word of God
  - Rom.10:17 Faith comes by hearing...
- Experiences that require faith
  - Deut. 8:2-5; Hebrews 4:1ff
  - Personal needs, trials
  - The needs & trials of others (II Cor.1:3-4)

Having completed my notes, I was not satisfied. So I continued to pray, and re-read the text. I would pray again, and re-read the text. I listened to Alistair Begg's sermon on the text, and though a good message, it had nothing in it I felt I could "borrow."

**When the church fails you, don't give up on Jesus.** This father comes not just to some disciples of Jesus, these are His choice disciples – the apostles. But these guys cannot help this father & his son. So when Jesus shows up, this dad comes out of the crowd & announces his complaint to Jesus – "I brought my son to your disciples, and they could not help me." What we are not told in the narrative is what it looked like when they tried to help. Were they praying in the name of Jesus? Did they lay hands on the father's son? Whatever they did, it didn't work.

In response to the father's complaint, Jesus erupts with an emotion of obvious frustration (v.19). Who is he frustrated with? The disciples? the father? It is clear to me that He is frustrated with "all of the above." He has left a perfect world and come to a very imperfect one, and one of the most imperfect things about it are people who are without faith ("O unbelieving generation").

See Mark 6:5-6; Matthew 6:30; Mark 4:40; Peter sinking, "Why did you doubt?"

The church is a very imperfect entity. If you have not discovered that, don't be surprised when you do. The church will sometimes fail you. In the church there are very imperfect people, and very imperfect leaders.

Ultimately we must not put our hope in the church, because the church presently is very imperfect. Our hope must be in Jesus. If our hope is only in the church, and the church fails us, we must never lose hope in Jesus.

The church fails the church, and history records for us the many times God's own people have failed one another. OT Joseph's brothers (the patriarchs of Israel!); The Old & New Testaments are filled with schism and division; Acts 6 neglect within the church; Paul & Barnabas; Euodia & Synteché (Philippians); Diotrephes in the church, etc.

The only forever perfect relationship we will have with the church is when we are married to Jesus. Please remember we are not in the future marrying one another but Jesus, then Jesus perfects His bride.

**God is sometimes frustrated with a world of unbelief, even among His people.**

- See Exodus 3:11, 13-14; 4:1, 10, 13-14, noting verse 14.
- Luke 24:25; Mark 16:14; Acts 9:10-16; Luke 1:11-20; Heb.11:6a

God's frustration is not because of some personal ego He has, but because our lack of faith hinders our spiritual growth, prevents Him from blessing us, and from us being a blessing to others. The more our faith grows, the greater blessing we will receive, and the greater blessing we will be to others. Abraham – through you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

**When you sense God's frustration with your unbelief, thank Him for His love and patience, and ask Him to increase your faith.**

Do you ever stop and marvel at the love of God for the world, & His patience with the world, even among His own people? He didn't have to do anything about our problems. We created them, it's not His fault. Jesus never had to leave the glories of heaven & take on a human body. He never had to humble Himself of His divine attributes and take on the nature of a servant (Phil.2). And of course He told us that nobody took His life, he willingly laid it down. See Psalm 8:1, 3-6, 9.

**The sovereign working of God as a result of the church failing this father and his son.**

This was a fascinating & wonderful revelation from this story. In the divine and wise sovereignty of Almighty God, these disciples are not able to help this father and his only child. And if they had, his encounter with Jesus would more than likely never have taken place. His son would have been delivered, and he would have gone about his life, hopefully thankful for what the Lord had done for him (through the church). But, he may have never grown in his faith, and likely never experienced such a personal encounter with Jesus.

I have for years seen parents bring their children to church, and expect the church to do for them what nobody else has been able to do. I saw this at Christian college, where many of the students were enrolled by their parents as sometimes a “last ditch effort” to set them free from the world, from drugs, from alcohol, or whatever. Now, let me say that there is nothing wrong with a parent bringing their children to church, or enrolling them in Christian college. What is wrong is when a parent does these kinds of things in an attempt to help their child, yet ignores the reality of their own need for spiritual growth, as well as their need for a personal encounter & relationship with Jesus.

When this man does encounter Jesus, the truth about his spiritual condition becomes evident, and thank God for his honesty with Jesus – “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.” You just cannot get more honest than that. How many times this has been, and still is, the cry of my heart. Can I get a witness?

Here is a father who has faith, but his faith needs to grow. Most people I talk to have faith, but I suspect many (perhaps most) of them are not growing in their faith. And for those that are growing, do any of you feel you have arrived to the level of faith you are satisfied with?

An honest confession to Jesus, and a sincere prayer, asking for His help for your faith to grow, will not only open the way for God to do amazing things for you personally, but for your kids as well. Could it be that God is using the problem with your child (or children) to drive you to a personal encounter with Him? Could it be that just taking your child (or children) to church is not enough to secure the miracle you need to turn things around in your family?

And I wonder, because we are not told, if any sin of this father was in any way connected with the condition of his son? David, great man of God, and at the same time a great failure with his children, especially Absalom (expound?)

When real revival comes to our world, guess where it begins? Not just in the home, but according to the Word of God, with **fathers** and their children. Malachi 4:6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. What God does in the child’s life is in direct connection to what He has done in the father’s life.

INVITATION

- Let me begin with fathers; What you need is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. I pray it begins right here, right now. Cry out to the Lord, repent of any sin in your life, if needed receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
- Mothers (esp. single mothers); Repent of the immoral relationship. You are bringing your children to church, yet living in sin. No wonder God cannot bless you. Cry out to the Lord, repent of any sin in your life, if needed receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
- Children; Perhaps the healing for your family will begin with your deliverance for whatever has you bound. Cry out to the Lord, repent, if needed receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
- All others who want their faith to increase – cry out to the Lord, repent of any sin in your life, and God will meet you right where you are.