

Commands  
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Mark 9:14-27

Opening: In life when things go wrong and you need help, you need someone you believe in. Question: **Other than your spouse, is there another human being you've always believed would do everything in their power to solve a problem for you? Who is it?**

We all need someone we can believe in; yet, people have human limitations.

In Mark chapter nine we meet another desperate parent grasping for a solution. He utters five of the most transparent words anyone ever confessed to Jesus: *"I believe; help my unbelief."* He had enough belief to turn to Jesus, but he confessed, "I not only need help with my child, I need help with my belief!"

Big Idea: (Quoting the Life Application Study Bible) *"Faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). No matter how much faith we have, we never reach the point of being self-sufficient. Faith is not stored away like money in the bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus."*

Big Question: When you have a big problem, you may believe God CAN (solve your problem) but do you trust His plan? Not only does God not owe us salvation, He also doesn't owe us an explanation -- about how He will fulfill His promise in Romans 8:28 to work all things together for our good.

To summarize: Faith is not stored like money in the bank. You may believe He CAN but do you trust His plan?

- Jesus with Peter, James, and John were coming down from a "mountain top" experience we call the Transfiguration most likely on Mount Hermon.
- Jesus' appearance was "transfigured" to demonstrate His divine glory.

- God the Father brought in Elijah and Moses for the celebration and confirmed verbally, *“This is my beloved Son. Hear Him.”* (9:7)
- After the ultimate “mountain top” experience with the Father, Jesus and the three walked into a mess back down in the valley.
- The remaining nine disciples were surrounded by a crowd and arguing with some scribes (religious leaders.)
- Ever come off of a “spiritual mountain top” experience and walk into a mess back down in the valley? **What’s the lesson for you and me?**
- As the song says, “the God on the mountain is STILL God in the valley!”
- The crowd was “amazed” at the sight of Jesus and ran to Him.
- Was His face still glowing like Moses’ face had glowed? Perhaps.
- Jesus takes charge: *“What is this? What are you arguing about?”*
- Another “desperate Dad” speaks up:
 

<sup>17</sup> ...“Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won’t let him talk. <sup>18</sup> And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn’t do it.” (NLT)
- Jesus turned to the “discredited disciples” and He was not happy!

Mark 9:19 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.”

- Ouch! Are you ‘cringing’ along with the nine disciples?
- **What does the word “faithless” tell you about why Jesus was mad?**
- Some quick background from Mark chapter six:
 

Mark 6:7 (ESV) <sup>7</sup> And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

Mark 6:13 (ESV) <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

- The disciples had recently been casting out evil, unclean, demonic spirits and yet, this time they were shooting “exorcistic blanks” – nothing!
- This gave the scribes something to “crow about.” Imagine them saying, “You Jesus followers think you’re so powerful, where’s your power now?”
- **How do you think the disciples got it wrong in this case? What step did they miss? What had they forgotten?**
- Bible Knowledge Commentary: *“The rhetorical questions further reflect Jesus’ continued distress over His disciples’ spiritual dullness (cf. 4:40; 6:50–52; 8:17–21).”*<sup>ii</sup> [We’re gonna drown! Nobody brought bread?]
- Wiersbe: *“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!”*<sup>iii</sup>
- **What “spiritual resources” do we sometimes neglect?**
- You might say the disciples had a “leaky faith tank.” But I’m getting ahead of myself. Back to the story.

Mark 9:20–29 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. <sup>21</sup> And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. <sup>22</sup> And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to him, “ ‘If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” <sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” <sup>25</sup> And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” <sup>26</sup> And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. <sup>28</sup> And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” <sup>29</sup> And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

- Verses 28 and 29: The disciples were perplexed. “How did we get it wrong, Jesus?” “This kind” requires prayer (and fasting.)
- Wiersbe: *“Why had the nine disciples failed? Because they had been careless in their personal spiritual walk and had neglected prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). The authority that Jesus had given them was effective only if exercised by faith, but faith must be cultivated through spiritual discipline and devotion.”<sup>iv</sup>*
- As we said, *“...Faith is not stored away like money in the bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus.”<sup>v</sup>*
- Let’s turn to this “desperate Dad.” He had good reason to be desperate!
- Listen to the description of the problem with his son: *“...[W]henver it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid.”<sup>vi</sup> ...when the spirit saw [Jesus], immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.”<sup>vii</sup> ...it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him.”<sup>viii</sup>*
- Think of those facts and imagine your own child or grandchild!
- The Dad came to the disciples in desperation and with a measure of faith.
- When they couldn’t solve his problem his faith was naturally shaken so he begged Jesus using a word we should never use where Jesus is concerned: the word “IF.” There are no “IF’s” with God’s power!
- The NKJV renders it *“If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”<sup>ix</sup>* Every other translation renders it as a question from Jesus: *“If you can?”* The Amplified Bible: *“Jesus said to him, “[You say to Me,] ‘If You can?’”<sup>x</sup>*
- In other words, “What do you mean IF I can do this?” All things are possible for one who believes.”
- That’s the problem Jesus. I believe, but I not only need help with my son, I need help with my belief! Ever had that problem? Ever felt bad about it?
- We can get the idea that after salvation we will have all the faith we’ll ever need to face whatever life throws at us. Ever try that with gas in your car?

- Chuck Swindoll uses an illustration of “...a reservoir, a pipeline, and a faucet. The reservoir of God’s omnipotence always exists and cannot be depleted, but it does people no good if they do not have a means to receive what God wants them to have. Faith—believing in the Lord’s power and mercy—is the pipeline from the reservoir of heaven to the life of the believer. Prayer is the faucet.”<sup>x1</sup>
- I chose a different illustration: Think of a car with a leaky gas tank.
- I filled that thing up and after fifty miles it’s empty again!
- You would say to the mechanic, “I have a gas tank; help my gas tank!”
- Jesus rebuked the disciples **why didn’t he rebuke the Dad?**
- Jesus won’t rebuke you and me for saying, “Help my unbelief!”
- Swindoll: “[The Dad’s] plea is a paradox that almost every Christian can appreciate: “I do believe; help my unbelief.” It is also a request God delights to hear and will always honor.”<sup>x2</sup>
- God doesn’t expect us to go through life’s problems on one, single “tank” of faith! He is the source and we need to stop and fill up through prayer!
- No one uses the term “high test” gas anymore, but when you and I are facing a “high test” problem we need some “high test” faith!
- This is important: It’s not about the strength of your faith; it’s about the OBJECT of your faith. “Word of faith” heresy teaches if you have enough faith you can get anything you want. That’s NOT what Jesus was saying.
- You can think really hard about needing gas, you can hope for gas, but until you pull up to the pump where the tank is, you ain’t gettin’ no gas!
- Another point: When you’re in the midst of problems do you ever try to help God with the plan?
- Lord, I can see what needs to happen so if you’ll just do A, and B, and C in that order I’ll give you all the praise. My plan, but I’ll tell ‘em You did it!
- **Why does that not work? Why do we keep trying to do it?**
- Question: You say you believe He CAN, but do you TRUST HIS PLAN?

- Lord, I believe, but can I have a detailed rundown of HOW you'll fix this?
- God is God not your GPS. Some of us won't use the GPS unless we can see the route in advance. God only works on a "turn by turn" basis.
- It's okay to pray specifically about the problem (Jesus at Gethsemane), just don't try to tell God what the outcome should be and how He should get you there.
- **Thoughts? Questions?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- *"No matter how much faith we have, we never reach the point of being self-sufficient. Faith is not stored away like money in the bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus."<sup>iii</sup>*
- God is not disappointed when you say, *"I believe; help my unbelief!"*
- He doesn't expect us to go through life's problems on one, single "tank" of faith! He is the source and we need to stop daily and fill up through prayer!
- It's not about the strength of your faith; it's about the OBJECT of your faith. You can think really hard about needing gas, you can hope for gas, but until you pull up to the pump where the tank is, there is no gas!
- He is the source; with a sense of dependence we must tap into His power.
- Don't just believe He CAN. Trust His plan – even when it seems unclear.
- As Jesus said to the Dad, "All things are possible for one who believes."

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<sup>i</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 162420-162422). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ii</sup> Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 144). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 142). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid*

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<sup>v</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 162420-162422). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vi</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Mk 9:18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>vii</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Mk 9:20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>viii</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Mk 9:22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>ix</sup> [\*The New King James Version\*](#). (1982). (Mk 9:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>x</sup> Amplified Bible (AMP) Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 90631. All rights reserved.

<sup>xi</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Mark (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 247). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>xii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>xiii</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 162420-162422). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.