

The Gospel of Mark

Walking with the Servant Savior

Lesson 13

Mark 9:1-50

Day One: Transformed Into Glory

The disciples were beginning to know Jesus as Son of God. After receiving a hard lesson on true discipleship (8:34-38), a select few of them were allowed to witness the Lord's glory apart from the earthly limitations of His humanity.

Read Mark 9:1-13; Matthew 17:1-13.

The event recorded for us here is a vivid illustration of the glory of the future kingdom awaiting God's people. The message Jesus was handing out was clear: first there is suffering, but suffering will ultimately lead to glory—both for Jesus and all those who choose to follow Him.

1. What powerful statement did Jesus make to His disciples in Mark 9:1?

Scholars disagree as to whether Jesus' words that some would not die before seeing the coming of the kingdom refer to those few who would witness the transfiguration, or all who would witness the Resurrection and Ascension, or all who would be involved in spreading the Gospel after the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Mark seems to indicate a strong connection between Jesus' prediction in verse 1 and the event that follows. The transfiguration was a powerful preview and assurance of His future coming in glory.

2. Who did Jesus elect to take with Him to the mountain? vv. 2-4

- a. Describe the event briefly in your own words.

- b. Who appeared to talk with Jesus?

Moses and Elijah were considered the two most prominent of the Old Testament prophets. Moses represented the Old Covenant of the Law; Elijah represented the prophets who foretold of the Messiah's coming. Their presence with Jesus was a confirmation of His mission on earth to fulfill God's law and the message of the prophets.

Getting a workout . . . (Word study) Using the resources you have on hand, write a definition for the word *transfigured*.

Mark's mention of the Lord's clothes becoming exceedingly—*dazzlingly*—white is unique to his account and probably reflects Peter's eyewitness account (see 2 Peter 1:16-18). This was not an earthly white, but rather a dazzling white that reflected the deity, holiness, and purity of the Lord. It emanated from within Jesus. For a brief moment He was visible to them as He will be when He returns to set up His kingdom on earth.

3. What was Peter's impulsive response to this great sight? vv. 5-7
 - a. How did his response reflect the feeling of all three men?
 - b. Who answered Peter?

The words, "*Hear Him*" are present imperative, indicating a command to "*Be obedient to Him.*" God was identifying His beloved Son (see 1:11) as the long-awaited Messiah, giving divine authority to what Jesus said and did. Moses and Elijah suddenly disappeared, leaving only Jesus. He—not Moses or Elijah—was to be God's authority.

4. What did Jesus then command His men? vv. 9-13
 - a. What did the disciples discuss among themselves, indicating their limited understanding?
 - b. What question did they raise about Elijah?

The disciples were unable to grasp the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death, and the idea of "rising again" from the dead. They were baffled about the fact that if Elijah had to come first and restore all things, then why did the Messiah have to suffer at all? Jesus told them that Elijah had indeed already come. Mark didn't state it, but Matthew's account (see Matthew 17:13) explains that *He was speaking to them about John the Baptist*. John had come *like Elijah*, to prepare the way for the Messiah. John, too, was mistreated and put to death. Jesus' statement forced the disciples to acknowledge Him as their Messiah. For the moment not all of their questions would be answered, but they were beginning to understand that the path to glory would not be an easy one.

Maybe you, too, have questions right now. Be patient. As you continue to grow as a Christian, so will your understanding. For today, imagine what awaits you in the not-too-distant future. Now you see only a glimpse of the Lord in His Word, but then you will see Him face to face in all of His glory!

Heartbeat . . . (Memory verse) "*Jesus said . . . 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.'*" Mark 9:23

Day Two: Power Comes Through Prayer

What to look for...

The disciples found themselves powerless when a father came to them for help. In the absence of Jesus, they had to learn to work and live by faith in God that is cultivated through prayer and fasting.

Read Mark 9:14-29

1. When Jesus returned with Peter, James, and John, what did they find? vv. 14-15

A discussion was ongoing between the disciples and the scribes, so Jesus turned to the scribes to ask about the nature of the conversation.

2. Who stepped forward to answer that question? What was his great need?
vv. 16-18

Hearing about Jesus' power to cast out demons, this father brought his son hoping for a healing; but the disciples were unable to drive the demon out of the boy. Apparently this caused the disciples some embarrassment, while affording the scribes the opportunity to discredit Jesus.

3. How did Jesus respond to their lack of faith? vv. 19-20
 - a. When the evil spirit saw Jesus, what did it do?
4. The failure of the disciples had cast a shadow of doubt on the father's ability to believe what Jesus could do. How was this worded in his request? v. 22
 - a. Jesus turned the father's question around to put the doubt in the right place. What did He declare? v. 23
 - b. Immediately understanding Jesus' meaning, the father turned from referring to Jesus as *Teacher* (v. 17), to calling Him *Lord*. What did he cry out? v. 24
5. When Jesus saw the people coming, what did He quickly do? vv. 25-27
 - a. What did the people in the crowd think?
 - b. What did the boy's ability to stand indicate?
6. In the aftermath, what question were the disciples struggling with? vv. 28-29

Jesus pointed directly to their lack of faith. Their words held no power over the evil spirit because they had not depended on God for power through prayer. They had been debating on what to do instead of praying it through! It was a painful lesson for them to learn, but faith demands complete reliance upon God.

Selah...

Are you perhaps wondering why your Christian walk lacks power? Maybe the situation calls for an honest self-examination of your faith. Are you debating about what to do, or perhaps calling on your own abilities to get the job done? Prayer—absolute reliance upon God—is the *key* that unlocks your faith to work!

Day Three: Unforgettable Lessons

What to look for...

At this point in time, Jesus was ending His public ministry and beginning His final walk toward Jerusalem. The disciples believed in Him, but they still needed further instruction. Jesus' desire was to keep their whereabouts secret so that He could focus intently on equipping His men for what would soon follow.

Read Mark 9:30-37

1. What point does Jesus drive home to the disciples for a second time? v. 31

Still struggling with the fact that Jesus kept emphasizing His own death, the disciples searched for meaning in His words.

2. Earlier Jesus spoke of His sufferings (v. 12); what different element does He now add to what He will have to endure as the Son of Man? vv. 31-32
 - a. Did the disciples feel a freedom to inquire further? Why?
 - b. What word of hope did Jesus add to His prediction that went unnoticed by the disciples?

Sadly, the disciples only heard the doom predicted in the first part of Jesus' words and they became discouraged. Since they were unable to comprehend the *purpose* behind His sayings, they also couldn't understand why Jesus would want to follow a road that would ultimately end in suffering and death.

3. *Personal:* Do you have a tendency to look at the circumstances of your life rather than seek *God's purpose* in your suffering? Would you let the Lord inject you with a healthy dose of *hope* today? Spend a few minutes meditating on Romans 8:16-18 and then share your thoughts.

4. Once they arrived back in Capernaum (most likely returning to Peter's home), Jesus turned to ask His men a probing question—what was it? v. 33
 - a. How did the disciples respond to Him and why?

This wasn't merely a discussion among friends; it had heated to an argument of debate about the pecking order! Perhaps it was prompted by the special privilege given to Peter, James and John, but no one wanted to admit they had played a part in it.

5. In attempting to address the issue, what great lesson in leadership does Jesus teach them? v. 35
 - a. What visual example did He use to illustrate this lesson in humility?

Interestingly, the Aramaic word Jesus used for *child* is *servant*. Keeping that thought in mind, we can appreciate when Jesus reached out and took the little child into His arms it became a powerful object lesson for His men.

6. Matthew's account records a few more words about this event. Briefly summarize Matthew 18:3-5.

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Four: Further Warnings

What to look for...

Jesus rebukes the disciples for their exclusiveness in challenging an outsider who uses His name to do good. He also deals with the need for self-evaluation using stark illustrations: the loss of a *hand*, a *foot*, or an *eye*—teaching that any activity leading to sin must be stopped, even if by drastic measures.

Read Mark 9:38-50

John brought up a situation that was troubling to the disciples. A man not part of their group was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. The disciples tried to stop him but then took the matter to the Master.

1. What did Jesus tell them? vv. 39
 - a. If the man's actions were not against Jesus, then how was he to be regarded? v. 40

- b. What simple gesture exemplifies that even the smallest service done for Jesus will not go unnoticed? v. 41

A little child and a stranger—both examples of servanthood and how we should treat one another. Jesus then turns His attention to the serious consequences that would befall anyone who mistreats *“one of these little ones who believe in Me.”*

2. What fate awaits those who cause the innocent—whether a child or a *child-like* believer—to stumble? v. 42

The disciples did not always get along with one another or with others, but Jesus tells them they must be very careful about how their behavior affects those around them.

3. What radical advice does Jesus give to remind His hearers to be on guard about whatever kind of activity they are engaged in that might cause others to stumble?
 - v. 43
 - v. 45
 - v. 47

The example Jesus uses above is not meant in the literal but rather figurative sense. Any body part that causes a believer to sin must be dealt with surgically to stop it! (Note: Verses 44 and 46 do not appear in the original manuscripts and were added to describe the eternal fate awaiting the wicked.)

The teaching on discipleship concludes with the final thought about the devoted life being laid on the altar—or given over as a living sacrifice to the Lord. The covenant offerings of the Old Testament were always required to be seasoned with salt (Leviticus 2:13b), which in that day could be polluted with impurities and lose its effectiveness.

4. According to Jesus, salt is good. v. 50 Give an example of its usefulness.

- a. How did Jesus refer to His disciples in Matthew 5:13?

- b. On the other hand, what happens if salt loses its flavor?

It's possible for believers to lessen their saltiness and, as such, their usefulness to the Lord. Since Jesus wants us to be at peace with one another, maintaining that peace means promoting purity in our relationships in a way that pleases God.

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Five:

Praying God's Purpose

It's time to do some *prayer walking*—not in the literal, but the *spiritual* sense. The Holy Spirit will lead you today as you consider three points from your lesson, write them in the form of a prayer, and lift them to the Lord. If practicing the presence of God is new to you—be patient—it will come, and you will be blessed!

"... We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Romans 8:26-27 NLT

A prayer for a greater glimpse . . .

What glimpse of the Lord's glory did He open up to you this week in His Word? Have you thanked Him for revealing Himself to you?

A prayer for power through prayer . . .

Have you been debating with yourself about what to do instead of praying it through? Remember: *prayer* is the key that unlocks your faith to work!

A prayer for pouring it on . . .

Does your life exhibit evidence of saltiness? Do you feel you have lost some of your usefulness? Tell God you're ready to be useful and ask Him to pour it on!

Write out this week's verse from memory:

Notes