



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 9:14-32

Mark 9

"Leaving the Mountain, Walking"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Good morning. Our passage this morning is Mark chapter and we'll look at verses 14 through 32. You'll remember that the previous passage was the transfiguration in which the disciples witnessed the Lord's glory on the mountain, and they have since come down from the mountain or they're on their way down when the story picks up in verse 14.

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them. And immediately when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running to greet Him. And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" And one of the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute, and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. And I told your disciples to cast it out and they could not do it." He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation. How long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me"

They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood and it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on

us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "'If you can?' All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, "I do believe – help me in my unbelief."

When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out, and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him and he got up. When He had come into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why is it that we could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He was unwilling for anyone to know about it. For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of man is to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He has been killed, He will rise again three days later." But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study together in it. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank you and praise you for the privilege we have to come together again this morning and to have fellowship around the Scriptures, and that's really where our fellowship is, discussing and thinking upon the things of God, the revelation that you've given to us. And so we pray that as we do this, you would instruct us and teach us because ultimately, you are the one that leads us into truth, who opens our minds to it and interprets it for us and then enables us to live consistently with it. So we pray for that, Father, and pray that you would bless us.

We thank you for the time we have to study, to read the Scriptures, to ponder these things together, and we thank you for the great privilege we have to engage in our priestly service of prayer for

one another, for this assembly and for others, for friends who have requested such prayers. We think of some in particular. We pray for Annie Lori Knox and pray that you'd continue to bless her. We thank you for the very good recovery she's had and pray that you would bless the doctors and nurses as they attend to her and pray that she'll be released very soon. We pray for John Wade and the surgery that he faces and pray that that would go very well and be very successful.

We think of these things, Father, and many others, and we're reminded that what we have is a gift, the life that we have, the health that we have is a gift from you and every moment of our life is a moment that you've given to us. And so we are grateful for that which you have given to us. We have much and we do thank you and confess that so often we take for granted what we have received from you and we don't show the kind of thankfulness that we should. Even when we have little, Father, we recognize that it's much because we deserve nothing.

And yet we have needs, and we pray for those who are without certain things. We pray for those whose health is failing, we pray that you would give healing. We pray certainly that you'd give encouragement and help those who are in difficulty to look to you. We pray for those who are unemployed, pray that you'd provide for them. We pray for those who are struggling with various difficulties at home or at work, that you would give great encouragement, give patience. So often the trials that drag on can wear down our spiritual condition and yet we need to continually look to you, knowing that you are in control and we pray that you would give that encouragement to those who need it.

Father, we pray for our assembly. We pray that you'd bless us with vitality. We pray that you'd bless us with a hunger for your truth. So easy it is, Father, to become indifferent to the things of God and yet this is what we live on. We recognize that we cannot grow and we cannot prosper in the faith apart from continually feeding upon the Word of God. And so we pray that you'd create within us an

appetite for it and a desire for it and instruct us and cause us to mature in the faith, that we might be a church that bears a very clear and active witness for you. Pray for those who teach and pray that you'd bless them in their gift and the use of their gift, and those that have other services here, bless them.

The deacons, we pray that you'd honor their work and give them diligence. And the secretaries and those who do janitorial work, all, Father, we pray would be done to your honor and glory. We thank you for the services they render and pray that you would bless them in that. Bless all of us as we seek to minister for you, to use our gifts, and strengthen us at this time as we look into the Scriptures. Fit us for the work that lies ahead this week, that we would be very actively engaged in it and that would be foremost in our thinking and on our minds.

We pray for the meeting tonight. We pray you'd bless it. We pray that you would prepare our hearts for it and we pray that it would be a time of edification, a time of genuine worship, a time in which we celebrate again our Lord's death/burial/resurrection, His ascension on high, and help us as we anticipate His return, that we would be encouraged by that and that would give us perspective in life.

We pray your blessing upon us now, Father, as we sing our final hymn. May it be effective in preparing our hearts for the teaching of Scripture, and may the Scriptures be taught clearly and well. We commend these things to you and pray your blessings upon us in all that we do, that all that we do would be to your honor and glory, for it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

[Message] A few years ago, J. I. Packer wrote, "Supernatural living through supernatural empowering is at the very heart of New Testament Christianity." A Christian life is a supernatural life, a life lived by faith in total dependence on the Lord, and our passage this morning underscores that fact with examples of human inability and divine sufficiency. And I think to see that in its clearest light, however, it really must be seen against the backdrop of the previous

passage in which Peter, James, and John were on the mountain, witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus. There we're told that His face became like the sun and His garments began to shine white as light.

It was an unveiling of His divine glory. It was an unveiling of the glory that He had with the Father before the world began. It was then that the Lord spoke out of the cloud and He said to these disciples, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him." Pay attention to Him, look to Him, and the importance of that instruction by the Father is illustrated in the events that were taking place at the bottom of the mountain where the other disciples were engaged in a futile attempt to cast out a demon from a young boy. This scene was captured on canvas by the great Renaissance painter, Raphael, in the last painting that he did entitled, "The Transfiguration," a painting on which he worked himself to death.

Appropriately, it's an artistic study in contrasts of light and shadow. In the darkly shaded foreground are the possessed son and the despairing father and the helpless disciples, and in the midst of that company, there is one man who's pointing to the light on the mountain where the Lord is bathed in power and glory. It's more than just a contrast between light and darkness in that painting. It is also a painting which shows the contrast of this passage, which is a contrast between the power and glory above with Christ and the struggles and the defeat below without Him. It's a reminder in that man who's pointing to the Lord above that apart from Christ, we can do nothing.

The whole passage is a reminder that we must look to Him who is sufficient for every challenge of life. We're to look to Him as our guide. Well, how do we do that? How do we find our sufficiency in Him? As the Lord explains to His defeated disciples later in the passage, we look to Him in faith through prayer. Where there is faith, there will be prayer, and where there is a lack of faith, there will be a lack of prayer. And prayer is necessary because for the most part, we don't live on the mountaintop with the lights and the sounds and the

rest and the glory of it all. We live today in the valley. We live with life's struggles and failures.

It's much more pleasant on the mountain, of course, and you'll remember how Peter wanted to stay up there, he didn't want to leave. He said, "It's good for us to be here," and so he proposed building three tabernacles and just staying on the mountain. He wanted to avoid the toil of life below and hang onto the glory and the joy of the moment, and I think we can understand that.

Coming down from the mountain is a little bit like going back to work on Monday morning or returning from a weekend retreat where you've had wonderful fellowship, you've listened to inspiring teaching and enjoyed some needed rest and spiritual refreshment. What a drag it is to have to come back from the country and go back to the city to work, to the struggles of everyday life, the routine of life, the dailiness of life. But we must. We have to do that. We have our responsibilities and we have to take them up. And the disciples, they had to leave the mountain. There was work to be done in the valley, and that was God's design.

What the Lord is doing in leaving that mountain is following the divine plan for His life and the plan for the lives of His disciples, and so it is for each of us. God has ordained that our lives are going to be lived in this fallen world where there are spiritual struggles, where there are difficulties, and He gives us moments of rest and ease and He gives us those moments of excitement. But much of our life is not lived in the euphoria of a spiritual high. It's lived in the routine of daily life. Much of it is lived 9 to 5, fighting the traffic on Central Expressway, folding laundry, helping the kids with math. A life in which our patience is often tested with the annoying interruptions that frequently enter in or our faith is challenged by some tragedies that occur within our family.

Well, that's what Peter and the others were returning to. They were leaving the glorious for the mundane because the glory and the rest are future. They're the reward. They are our inheritance, and

what they had just seen on the mountain with the transfiguration was the assurance that they would have that. Peter makes that point in 2 Peter 1:19 where he makes the point that through what he had seen, the prophetic word had been made more sure to him. He knew that that was coming, that was his inheritance, that's what he was looking forward to. But that's future. That's to come. The present is struggle. It is, as the Lord had told His disciples, a day of cross bearing. That's the way we live in the present.

But events at the foot of the mountain illustrate how we're to live that life so that the struggles may be victories and the routine may have joy, real excitement, true fulfillment in this world. It's by supernatural living in the power that we appropriate by faith through prayer.

Well, it's Monday morning for the Lord and His disciples, and as they were returning to the other disciples, verse 14 states they saw a large crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them. Now, the fact that these teachers of the law had come so far north, all the way up to Caesarea Philippi, shows how determined they were to monitor our Lord's activity. And when they arrived, they found an opportunity to criticize the Lord and to criticize His ministry, to criticize His disciples, because a father had brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples, and they were unable to deal with his case.

They were unable to cast out the demon, and so an argument followed, and you can just see the scribes begin to ridicule the disciples and their inability. And yet while the scribes were making their criticisms and belittling the Lord's power and His authority, the Lord returns. To the surprise of everyone, Mark says they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. Their amazement was due to His unexpected arrival. Now, they knew He was on the mountain and they didn't expect Him to be back at such an opportune time, but that's true to our Lord. He comes to our aid at the right time, He

comes to us at the opportune time, and just at the time when these disciples needed him, unexpectedly, He comes.

And when He arrives, He asks the scribes what they were discussing with His disciples. That's when a man from the crowd speaks up and explains the circumstances in verse 17. "Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute, and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out." Now, from the description that's given here of the boy's symptoms, it's very clear that he had a severe case of epilepsy, which was either triggered by a demon or more likely caused by the demon. The result was severe seizures.

As the father explains in verses 21 and 22, he had been in this condition from childhood, and in an attempt to destroy him, the demon would cause the boy to fall into the fire and into the water. Luke adds a somewhat poignant point to this when he states that the boy was the father's only son, and so Jesus, God's only Son, was moved to compassion over this child, and yet he's also moved to grief as the father recounted how he asked the Lord's disciples to cast it out and they could not do it. Their failure provoked the Lord to respond in verse 19, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?"

Now, this word "generation" is probably a reference to the disciples. That's not all that certain, but I would think that it is probably referring specifically to them since it was their inability to cast out the demon that provoked it, it was their lack of faith that caused the failure. And what made that so discouraging to the Lord was that they had been given authority over demons. Earlier, back in chapter 6, He had sent them out on a mission. They went out in pairs and we read there that He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. So they went out with this authority and they exercised this authority. They had great success then, but here they failed – because of a lack of faith.

That is, a lack of faith in the Lord. They had faith but their faith was in themselves, and that was really the problem. They approached the situation with self-confidence, probably due to their previous success. They looked at that and they took great confidence in what they had accomplished, what they'd done in the past, and so they looked to themselves, they looked to their success, and they did not look to the Lord. They did not lean upon Him. They didn't pray, as He will tell them, and that's what He says later in this passage. They didn't look to the Lord as the source of their power. They treated the authority that He had given them as though it were their own, as though it had its source in themselves. So as a result, there was failure.

You can just picture the scene. The distraught father brings his tormented son and he asks, "Where's Jesus?" He'd heard of Him, he knew what He'd done, he's looking for this one who is the hope for this child, and the disciples answer, "Well, He's not here. He's up on the mountain, praying, and He won't be back for a few days, but we're His disciples. What's the problem?" And so explains their desperate situation and he asks, "Can you help?" They looked at each other, I'm sure, filled with confidence in their ability, and smiled at one another and said, "Sure. We're the Ghostbusters. We've got this down to a science. This'll be a piece of cake."

And so he said, "Bring him here," and so they began to work on this demon. They command it to come out but nothing happens. They command it again, nothing happens. They raise their voices, maybe that'll help. They yell at it but still nothing. They invoke the name of Jesus and they invoke the name of Jehovah. Still nothing happens, and by now the scribes have begun to gather and were ridiculing their failure, rubbing it in. Frustrated, they tried every formula they could think of but nothing changed. The demon was immovable. They were leaning on themselves, full of their own previous success, and failure followed.

But sometimes, failure is necessary in order to keep us from becoming too full of ourselves. It serves to remind us of the real source of spiritual victory, and that's one of the wonderful things about the Christian life. There really is nothing that does not serve God's purpose in our life. Even our failures, even when we stumble. That is used of God in His way to conform us into the image of Christ and to serve in making us people more after His heart, people who seek Him.

Spurgeon has some words on that. He points out that God gives the measure of victory that is safe for us. He writes: "If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let your unhumbled spirit win a victory in His holy war, you would pilfer the crown for yourself, and meeting with a fresh enemy, you would fall victim; so that you are kept low for your own safety. Sometimes failures come for our own good and they alert us to a problem so that when a greater test comes, we will not have a greater fall.

Well, this was a humiliating experience for the disciples but one that would prove instructive, and the instruction is first given in this sharp response by our Lord, "O unbelieving generation. How long shall I be with you?" It's an expression of exasperation close to heartbreak, as one writer puts it. In spite of all of the time that He had spent with them and that they had spent with Him, their understanding of Him was still shallow and their faith was very weak. So much so that it was hard to distinguish them from the rest of that unbelieving generation. There they are with the scribes and other people, and He looks at them and He says, "You're really not much different than them. You're an unbelieving generation."

It's a sad thing when the people of God are hard to distinguish from the world. I wonder if that isn't true of some of us, if it isn't true of the church at large. It is so much like the world around us that it just blends in. Well, we are called to live a life of faith and that is at the heart of our passage, and living a life of faith is totally contrary to

the life of the world, which lives by sight. If we don't live by faith, then we lose the vitality of our Christian life and we begin to blend in, we begin to look just like the world. That's the danger, and that's what we see here with these disciples, and it provokes this question from our Lord, "How long?" He's ready for the end. He's longing for the glory that he left up on the mountain because of the discouraging conduct of His disciples.

But the Lord doesn't quit on the disciples. He never does. His patience is long with them, just as it is with us, and He will continue to teach them throughout the rest of this gospel and in doing so, He will prepare them for the day when they will carry on His work in His place. We have the nice advantage of knowing the end of that, knowing what happens to these men, and we can take great comfort and encouragement in the fact that we see them in this weakness of faith and know that God's not finished with them and He'll continue to work with them and He will make them the kind of men that can take His place after He leaves and carry on the ministry which He established.

That's the encouraging truth that we all have, that He's never finished with us. What He begins in the life of His people, He always ends. He brings it to a successful conclusion.

Well, their insufficiency is now answered by His complete sufficiency. He says, "Bring him to me" – and that's always the answer, the answer is always found in coming to Christ – and as they did, the child went into a violent seizure, falling to the ground, convulsing and foaming at the mouth, which shows that this was not an ordinary case of epilepsy but one that was caused by the demon. It was evidently one last attempt on the part of this demon to destroy the boy and frustrate the work of the Lord and prevent a salvation from occurring. When the Lord saw it, He was moved deeply, and He asked the father how long this condition had persisted.

Like a physician, He's asking the right questions to make the right diagnosis, and the father describes how this violent, suicidal

condition had gone on from childhood. And then he pleads, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Now, that reveals much about the father's state of mind because it's a request that's filled with doubt. "If you can," he asks. Now, when he brought that son originally to the disciples, he was confident that they could heal. He asked them to do that. But their failure to do that led him to question the Lord's ability for having success with this demon. (Maybe this is just too much for even you. Your disciples couldn't do it, I'm not sure you can do it.)

Now, that may not be reasonable on his part, but it's the way it is. The world often measures Christ by his disciples. And after all, we are His body. We are his representatives, his ambassadors in this world and there is a sense in which the world should be able to measure Christ by looking at us. We're His representatives. So because that's the case, our failures due to lack of faith send a message to the world. Just as our faith, our obedience to the Lord, sends a powerful message as well. Well, here, it's the failure that's communicated, the failure of the disciples to cast out the demon cast doubt into the mind of the father, and he weakly requests help from the Lord.

His confidence has been shattered. He wasn't sure that the Lord could help, and so the Lord addresses his weakness of faith by immediately fixing on the word "if." Verse 23: "'If you can.' All things are possible to him who believes." You see, the issue here is not whether Jesus can or cannot deal with this unclean spirit. Of course He can, He's the Son of God. That's been made very clear on the Mount of Transfiguration and the Father Himself said, "This is my beloved Son." He can do it. The issue is not with the Lord, the issue is with this man, the issue is faith. Does this man believe in Him? Does he trust in Christ? Because there's no blessing apart from faith.

The author of Hebrews makes that very clear. Hebrews 11:6: Without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek

Him." Now, that statement by the author of Hebrews tells us some important facts about faith, which are implied in our Lord's question. Faith is knowledgeable. That is, it's grounded in a knowledge of the one who is being trusted. Faith believes that He is, so it has some theological grounding. And really, I think that's self-evident. We don't trust people that we know nothing about. We trust people we know about. We base our trust upon the knowledge that we have and that's the reason we trust them.

For example, suppose I have some money that I've saved up. It's my life savings and I decide it's time to make it work for me, and I read the newspaper and I watch the news, and I keep seeing how the stock market keeps going up, it keeps reaching record highs, and so I'm going to invest it in the stock market. But since I don't know, really, anything about the stock market, I entrust my savings to an acquaintance and allow him to invest it for me. Well, you find out about this and come to me and you say, "You know, you're putting your savings at risk. What do you know about this individual that you have entrusted your money to?"

And I say, "Well, not much. I know that he was convicted a few years ago of fraud and he spent some time in jail. Most people think he's a swindler. He's a con artist, so they say, but, you know, opinions differ and, really, faith has nothing to do with knowledge. I believe in him and, really, it's how much you believe, how intensely you believe, not what you believe that's important." Well, now, that's ludicrous. You'd never handle your money that way and yet many people handle their lives, their spiritual lives, that way. That's just the way some people talk about religion, as though faith and knowledge are separate. But we can't trust someone, it's impossible, really, if we're rational about things, to trust someone who's untrustworthy.

And so to have faith in Christ, to trust in Him, a person must know about Him. That, I think, lies behind the Lord's words here where he says, "All things are possible to him who believes" – that is,

who believes in Him, who has a knowledge of Him. The faith that pleases our Lord and obtains His blessings is based on a knowledge of Him and a knowledge of His Will. Nowhere do we find in the Scriptures, "All things are possible for those who believe hard enough." God operates according to His promises. He operates according to His Will, and we are to pray and to live according to the promises that He has made according to the Will that He has revealed to us.

This man obviously had knowledge about our Lord. He knew that the Lord could heal. There was ample evidence for that and that's why he came, and he knew that the Lord would heal everyone who came because he had healed everyone who came. The Lord doesn't turn people away. All who come to Him, He receives and He blesses and He would heal. So he had confidence that that was the Lord's Will. There was always success when the Lord ministered. In fact, I think that's an interesting and significant thing to bear in mind when we hear people talk about the apostolic gifts being active today and people claiming that for themselves or for their group.

Measure that by what we see in the New Testament and every time someone was sick or demon-possessed and brought to the Lord, He received them and He healed them completely. There were no failures, no one was turned away. The only failure we have is this one here, and this was because of the disciples' lack of faith. The Lord corrects that. So this man had ample reason for believing that Christ could heal and that He would heal if that was His Will, but with the disciples' failure, he was having doubts. So the question that the Lord put to him was, "Do you trust me?" Do you believe in me to heal your child?

He was challenging the man's faith, and often that's why trials, long, drawn-out trials, the nature of health or finances or whatever the case may be, that's why they come. They challenge our faith and they drive us to the Lord, and not only that, not only do they drive us to the Lord but they compel others around us to come to our aid in prayer

and in various ways. The Lord uses that to draw people into faithful service and to draw people to Him. So it was with this man, and immediately he responds, "I do believe. Help me in my unbelief." It was a recognition on his part that he had faith but his faith was mixed with unbelief. It's genuine faith but imperfect faith, and so he appeals to the Lord to help him where his faith was ready to fail.

It's an honest prayer and it's a prayer, I think, that reflects a truth about all of us. Belief and unbelief contradict each other, but the reality is we all live with that contradiction. None of us have perfect faith. This is a good prayer for all of us to pray, to seek the Lord's help for our unbelief, to help us in our unbelief because we all need that help. And He does, He helps. He helped this man. Helped him in his unbelief. Not by taking him aside and giving him a lesson on faith and the power of faith and how to use that faith, He helps him by blessing the little bit of faith that he had, by healing his child.

Later, in Matthew's account of this incident, when the disciples ask, "Why could we not cast it out?" the Lord answered that it was because of their lack of faith. "If you have faith as a mustard seed," he said, "you can move mountains." So the Lord blesses faith, even when it's as small as a mustard seed. But it's by blessing it and in our seeing the blessing of it that our faith is given growth and it begins to increase. A mustard seed is often used by our Lord in parables because it fits so well with the parables that He gives, and here it fits so well with that expression because it's very, very small and with all of us, our faith begins small. It begins weak.

But faith that's genuine is alive, like a mustard seed, and it has the potential for growth, and the mustard seed has potential for great growth, for becoming a great plant, and so it is with faith. It grows as we exercise it. That little bit of faith becomes great faith as we exercise it, and as the Lord blesses us, we take God at His Word and rely on Him and act in obedience. The Lord is very generous with us. While He demands everything from us, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow Him, He also knows our weaknesses and He helps

us grow in our capacity for obedience, and this man is an example of that.

He comes to the Lord with weak, wobbly faith but the Lord blesses his faith. We read in verses 25 and 26 that he rebuked the unclean spirit, identifying it according to the afflictions it caused. "You deaf, dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again," and after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out, and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He's dead." Now, he wasn't actually dead. Mark writes that he became like a corpse. He was so completely exhausted by the ordeal that he looked dead.

But that description may be intended to suggest something to us about what the Lord has accomplished. In that description of death, it may be intended to remind us of what man is naturally, spiritually, and his condition is one of death and remind us of what the Lord has accomplished on our behalf. Because we'll see that the Lord raises that child up and that's what He's done with us. We who were dead in our transgressions and sins have been made alive and raised with Him. In fact, this whole terrible scene is illustrative of the general condition of mankind and what we as believers have been delivered from. John writes at the end of his first epistle, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

That's the spiritual environment in which we were born. We were born into the domain of Satan. Paul also says in Ephesians 2:2, you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. So we followed him as children of wrath, sons of disobedience, according to that course, which, as we look at the violence of this demon and the way it treated that child, is a course of destruction. But the Lord came to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver us from his power and deliver us from that course. That's why He came down from the mountain.

Had He stayed up there and continued to be bathed in light and glory and all of that and the adoration of those three disciples, we

never would have been redeemed. We would be lost. There'd be no kingdom to enter into. He had to come down from the mountain. He knew that and that's why, as Luke records shortly after this, He resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem where He would make his exodus and deliver us from the domain of Satan and the penalty of sin. This incident, in fact, with the child lying as dead foreshadowed the dethroning of Satan because in dethroning Satan, the author of Hebrews says Christ rendered powerless him who had the power of death; that is, the devil.

And that's where we as believers, we as people who are in Christ, that's where we stand today, delivered from Satan's authority. Now, he's still around. We're still in a spiritual battle. Peter says that he prowls about like a roaring lion. The drives down Central Expressway, the tedious hours of housework, the upheavals at work or in the home, they can be occasions for Satan's attacks, for his temptations, for various discouraging thoughts that he puts within our minds, but Peter says resist him firm in your faith, and James assures us that if we do that, if we resist him, he will flee from us. He has his fiery darts which he hurls at God's people, but as we walk by faith, firm in our faith, trusting in the Lord, we meet his assaults victoriously because Christ has gained the victory for us.

So with the demon driven out from the exhausted child, Jesus took him by the hand and raised him and he got up. Afterward, the Lord entered a house with the disciples, who were very puzzled over all of this, and verse 28, they ask him: "Why is it that we could not cast it out? After all, you gave us the authority to cast out demons and we did it in the past, why couldn't we do it now? Why were we powerless?" So the Lord explains: "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer," and prayer is simply an exercise of faith. It's looking to the Lord, asking Him for His help, just like that father did when he asked, "Help us, Lord."

That's how we are to live. That's how we're to live our lives, in prayerful dependence on the Lord, because prayer is the means given

to us for appropriating the strength and the wisdom that we have in Christ. When we don't, we don't live by faith, when we don't look to Him, when we don't trust in Him, then we will experience failure just like these disciples did.

At the beginning, I quoted J. I. Packer on the Christian life being a supernatural life. He has some helpful words on prayer and praying in the Spirit. It includes four elements. He writes: "First it is a matter of seeking, claiming, and making use of access to God through Christ. Then the Christian adores and thanks God for His acceptance through Christ and for the knowledge that through Christ his prayers are heard. Third, he asks for the Spirit's help to see and do what brings glory to Christ, knowing that both the Spirit and Christ Himself intercede for him as he struggles to pray for rightness in his life. Finally, the Spirit leads the believer to concentrate on God and His glory in Christ with a sustained single-minded simplicity of attention and intensity of desire that no one ever knows save as it is supernaturally wrought."

So how do we pray in the Spirit? Well, we seek the Lord in prayer, to begin with, and in doing that, we praise Him and we thank Him for the fact that in Christ, our prayers are heard. The prayers that you pray as a Christian are heard by God, so there's every reason to use that access that we've been given to Him in Christ. He hears our prayers, and thirdly, we pray for the Spirit's help to do that which is pleasing to Him, to do that which is right, to do that which brings glory to the name of Jesus Christ, and as we do that, our minds are filled with Christ, they're controlled by the Spirit, and all of that is a supernatural work of the Lord. It's as we do that, as we seek to glorify Christ, to fill our thoughts with Him, to make Him the goal of our actions, as we pray for His help, that we experience the Spirit's enabling power and the mundane of this world in which we live becomes glorious and the routine becomes joyous.

That's the kind of life that we're to live. That's the kind of life that the disciples were to live, and had they lived that kind of life at

that moment, when that demon-possessed boy was brought to them, they would have succeeded.

Now, following these things, the Lord and the disciples journey south, passing through Galilee on their way to Jerusalem. The Lord's destination was not Galilee; His Galilean ministry is finished. He was now going to Jerusalem where He would complete His mission of salvation. So the book is turning now in that direction. And teaching the disciples about what He would do in Jerusalem, teaching them about His death becomes the focus of His attention. He's preparing them for what would occur some six months later. And so He was avoiding the crowds, He was avoiding distractions, in order to teach them. Verse 31 states that the Son of man is to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and when He has been killed, He will rise again three days later.

This is His second prediction of His death, and one of the few examples of His teaching in the gospel of Mark. Mark, you'll remember, is primarily a record of our Lord's actions, of His works, not His words, and that in itself is very instructive because the Lord Jesus came into the world not primarily to say something, not even to be something, but to do something, and that something was to give life through His death and resurrection to those who were dead in their trespasses and sins. Understanding that and entrusting our soul to Him as the one who saves is where faith begins, and that's where the life of faith begins.

Everything we say here about the life of faith means nothing if a person has not yet first believed in Jesus Christ as Savior. This is where faith begins, in trusting ourselves to the Savior, and that's where the life of faith begins and continues on. And Scriptures are very clear that the Lord Jesus is one in whom we can trust as our Savior and one who we can trust as our guide throughout life. But again, the disciples failed to penetrate into the meaning of His words. They didn't understand and verse 32 states they were afraid to ask

Him. Well, why is that? Why were they afraid to ask Him for some clarification on what He said?

Well, perhaps they're like a lot of students who sit there with a professor and they're little embarrassed to ask a question because they're afraid it's going to be a stupid question and they might get ridiculed. Maybe they had been thinking of Peter when he was rebuked by the Lord earlier – "Get behind me, Satan" – and they didn't want to face that. Or perhaps it's because they were afraid to learn the meaning of His words, a meaning that would be too painful for them. This is not the first time He's mentioned His death, and so having mentioned it this second time, the light was beginning to dawn on them, and what they were beginning to understand troubled them.

They were like men or women who are afraid to go to the doctor because they're afraid of the news that they might receive and what they might be told, and so they avoid going altogether. People are like that with spiritual things as well. They are afraid to hear the truth of what is being said because of what it might mean. When Felix heard Paul speak about faith in Christ and the judgment to come, he became frightened. He trembled and he sent Paul away. "Enough of this, we'll talk about this some other time," he says. The warning of judgment struck a chord in Felix's soul and he sensed his guilt and he became frightened of what was coming, with the judgment to come.

But when the way of escape opened before him, the way of faith alone in Christ as Savior, he couldn't let go of self, he couldn't let go of the world, and so he just dealt with the situation by refusing to hear it, by just shutting it off. What a tragedy it is to be afraid to hear what is good news, to be afraid to hear the promise of eternal life that is ours freely, to simply receive the work that Christ has accomplished on the cross by faith and enter into that life.

If you're here this morning and you've not believed in Christ for salvation, don't become frightened by the good news, by the Word of salvation. Trust in Christ. Invest your soul with Him. He's the Son of God who has demonstrated Himself to be trustworthy. He gives

spiritual health. He gives spiritual healing. He gives salvation to all who draw near to Him. That is His Will, that all who come to Him, He will in no wise cast out. Come to Him and you'll be received and you'll enter into salvation because He has accomplished deliverance from the evil one, because He's paid the price for sin at the cross when He died as the substitute for sinners.

Satan now has no authority over those who've been forgiven. Satan's power is in sin. That's where he has the power in a person's life, and we have been delivered of the power of sin. It's been broken in our lives. He has no hold on us. The justice of God has no hold over the people of God because we've been forgiven of all of our sins, we are guiltless, we have been delivered from that judgment to come, we've been delivered from the justice of God, we are innocent in Christ and because we are in Christ, we are heirs of eternal life. That's ours through faith and through faith alone.

If you've not believed in Christ, may God help you in your unbelief. May God give you the faith. May God open your eyes to your need and cause you to turn to Him and receive the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. May God help you to do that. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

[Prayer] Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great truth of which we are reminded in this passage, that while we are insufficient of ourselves, we are totally dependent upon you. You are completely sufficient. We are to look to you in faith, look to you through prayer, and know that you deliver and you bless and you give the victory. Lord, help us to live by faith because it's as we live by faith that we become productive, we find our fulfillment in this life, we serve you, we bring glory to you, the mundane becomes glorious, the tedious becomes joyful. God, help us to live by faith as only you can help us to do that. We acknowledge, Father, that we believe but help us in our unbelief. We pray these things in our Savior's name, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Amen.