

Main Idea: This morning, as we return to our journey through Mark’s gospel, we’ll be in Mark 9. It’s here that we see the Master Teacher using a very interesting teaching device to reveal truth about Himself, and about us too. He uses the hard cases. There are three scenes in today’s text.

- I. We see our weakness (14-19).
 - A. The disciples faced a problem (14-18).
 1. They saw a father in distress.
 2. They saw a boy in bondage.
 3. They saw critics who challenged them.
 - B. Jesus exposed the real problem (19).
 1. We tend to believe only what we can see.
 2. We need real faith.
- II. We see His sufficiency (20-27).
 - A. Jesus taught the father about faith (20-24).
 1. We need more than verbal faith.
 2. We need to face our doubts.
 3. We need Jesus to help us overcome our unbelief.
 - B. Jesus demonstrated why we can believe Him (25-27).
 1. He is powerful.
 2. He is compassionate.
 3. He finishes what He starts.
- III. We see how much we need Him (28-32).
 - A. We aren’t sufficient (28-29).
 1. If we really believe that, we’ll pray.
 2. If we pray, we’ll see Him do what He alone can do.
 - B. We need a Savior (30-32).
 1. We need Him to teach us.
 2. We need Him to save us.

Make It Personal: When the hard cases come...

1. Let’s admit that we are insufficient.
2. Let’s affirm that He is sufficient.
3. Let’s ask Him for help with our unbelief.

This morning, as we return to our series “*The Servant in Action*”, we’ll be in Mark 9. It’s here that we see the Master Teacher using a very interesting teaching device to reveal truth about Himself, and about us too. He uses the hard cases.

Would you agree that the Lord is sovereign, that He’s in control of everything that happens in this world, including what happens in our lives? He is, of course. So if something happens, good or bad (from our perspective), it happens because He either caused it, or permitted it.

Does this include our failures? Yes. Sometimes, as in this morning’s passage, the Lord who loves us allows us to fail. Why would He do that? He has the power to prevent bad things from happening to us, including our failures. So why doesn’t He prevent them? Why instead does He send us right into a hard situation?

This is huge struggle for many people, including people sitting in churches right now. Perhaps it’s huge for you.

In His kindness, the Lord has given us this helpful passage in front of us. Let’s read it, and then marvel at it, and marvel specifically at the One who orchestrates the hard cases in our lives.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

Scripture Reading: Mark 9:14-32

It's been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. So let's begin with a picture of today's text, a painting by Raphael entitled "The Transfiguration" that hangs in the Vatican:²



Kent Hughes offers this explanation: “The uppermost part pictures the transfigured form of Jesus, with Moses on the left and Elijah on his right. On the next level are the three disciples, Peter, James, and John, recently awakened and shielding their eyes from Jesus’ blinding brilliance. Then, on the ground level, is a poor demon-possessed boy, his mouth hideously gaping with wild ravings. At his side is his desperate father. Surrounding him are the rest of the disciples, some of whom are pointing upward to the glowing figure of Christ—who will be the boy’s only answer. Raphael has brilliantly captured something of the overwhelming contrast between the glorious Mountain of Transfiguration and the troubled world waiting below.”³

It’s great up on the mountain. When you’re on the mountain you feel God’s presence. But down in the valley it’s *reality*. In the real-world, children get sick, critics challenge you, and the attack of the evil one is vicious. That’s exactly what the disciples faced in Mark 9. They walked right into *the hard case*.

² www.liveonegoodlife.com/2021/the-transfiguration-by-raphael/

³ Kent Hughes, p. 21.

In the first part of Mark 9 Jesus permitted three of His disciples to go with Him up on a mountain and there see a demonstration of His glory. He was transfigured right before their very eyes. They saw Him in His radiant splendor, and even heard the Father's voice, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!"

It was a great moment, a mountain-top experience for the disciples. Then they headed down the mountain, and things that were very clear up on the mountain suddenly weren't so clear down in the valley.

We too experience this dynamic every week. Sunday is a mountain-top day for us. On Sunday we gather with God's people, secluded from the world, sing songs, hear the teaching of God's Word, and talk about how important the Lord is to us. We feel His presence. *On Sunday.*

Then Monday comes, and with Monday comes the hard case. What do I mean by the hard case? It could be a person, or some family drama, or a sticky situation at work. It's called the hard case because it's *hard*. It frustrates us. It reveals our lack of control, our weakness, our inadequacy.

Again, the Lord was so real, *on Sunday*. But He seems distant on Monday, or Tuesday, or Friday, when we confront the hard case. And why is that?

There's something that's deficient, something that needs to grow, or maybe isn't even there. It's what Jesus teaches us about in Mark 9. *Faith*. We may have a "Sunday faith," but what does our faith look like the other six days?

For many of us, faith is like the story of a man who was sentenced to death, who obtained a reprieve by assuring the king that he would teach his majesty's horse to fly within the year. If he didn't succeed, he would be put to death at the end of the year.

"Within a year," the man explained later, "the king may die, or I may die, or the horse may die. Furthermore, in a year, who knows? Maybe the horse will learn to fly."⁴

That's kind of how some people view faith. Talk to them on Sunday, "Sure, I believe in the Lord. He's great." But will He make a difference in my life down in the valley this week? "I don't know, but He's the best option I've seen so far."

Here's what the hard cases are all about. *The Lord is interested in producing a vibrant faith in the lives of His people.* How does He do it? He shows us in Mark 9. One of the ways is by using the hard cases. There are three scenes in today's text, which demonstrate three potential outcomes when we encounter the hard case in life.

I. We see our weakness (14-19).

Verse 14 gives the context, "When they came to the other disciples." *They* refers to Jesus, Peter, James, and John. They just left the mountain, probably Mount Hermon, and were rejoining the other nine disciples. Notice what happened. First...

A. The disciples faced a problem (14-18). "And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?' ¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, 'Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.'"

⁴ Bernard M. Baruch.

Wiersbe remarks, “In one day, a disciple can move from the glory of heaven to the attacks of hell.”⁵ The disciples had enjoyed some good days since they began to follow Jesus, but so far this wasn’t one of them. They encountered a threefold problem.

1. *They saw a father in distress.* What was his name? Where did he live? Did he have a wife? We’re not told. We do know he made the effort to bring his son to Jesus for healing but had to settle for His disciples, and to his dismay, try as they might, they failed to help him. And he told Jesus as much, “I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”



In Luke’s account his plea is more intense, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child.” Matthew’s account indicates that the man fell on his knees before Jesus.

2. *They saw a boy in bondage.* The problem? He was possessed by an evil spirit, a demon that was ruining his life. The demon had made the boy mute and also caused him to go into severe epileptic-like seizures. Luke elaborates on the father’s description (Luke 9:39), “A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.”



Yes, Satan is a destroyer. His aim is to get at God by destroying the image of God.

3. *They saw critics who challenged them.* Notice verse 14 again, “When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.” Back in chapter 3 the Jewish teachers of the law (“scribes”) made it clear what they thought of Jesus. “He is possessed by Beelzebub!” they said (3:22). The critics had been hounding Jesus since then trying to expose Him.



⁵ Wiersbe, p. 141.

Here we see the scribes heckling the nine disciples following their failed attempt to help the mute boy:

“You say your Master is so powerful?” they jabbed.

“He IS powerful,” the disciples shot back.

“Sure doesn’t look like it to us. If He’s so powerful, prove it. Set that boy free!”

“Well, we’re trying but something’s not working today. We’re not sure what, but something’s wrong.”

“We’ll tell you what’s wrong,” the scribes retorted. “YOU are wrong. You are frauds. This Jesus you are following is a fraud!”

No, things weren’t going too well for the disciples that day. The disciples faced a problem they couldn’t solve, a hard case.

It was at that point that Jesus showed up, right in the middle of this argument. “What are you arguing with them about?” Jesus asked His disciples. How they replied, Mark doesn’t tell us. Mark indicates that the demon-possessed boy’s father answered Jesus’ question, explaining about his son and the disciples’ failure to help.

Then Jesus spoke again, and in so doing He exposed the real problem.

B. Jesus exposed the real problem (19). “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.’”

What did the hard case reveal? Listen to Jesus. *O faithless generation*. It was a faith predicament, a lack of faith to be precise. Whose faithlessness does Jesus have in mind? The disciples’? The father’s? The scribes’? He doesn’t specify and since we don’t have video replay in the Scriptures, we don’t know who He is making eye contact with as He exposes the faith deficiency. Perhaps it’s all of the above.

So who Jesus had in mind *specifically*, we can’t be sure. But of this we can be certain. We all struggle with the problem that Jesus exposed that day.

And why is that? Here’s the answer.

1. *We tend to believe only what we can see*. We’re like Thomas (John 20:25), “*Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.*” See it, then believe it, that’s our bent. That’s also why we do so well when we’re up on the mountain, when we’re seeing the evidence of God’s presence. But if we’re going to live for the Lord down in the valley, we need more than Sunday faith.

2. *We need real faith*. Thursday faith. The kind of faith we read about in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and *certain of what we do not see.*” This is what the Lord desires from us, and what He’s intent on producing in us. Faith is being confident that He will do what He said He would do. True faith is based on God’s promise, not the feeling of His presence.

I read that the African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. I also read that these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot wall. Why? Because the animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall.⁶

George Mueller once said, “Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends.”

⁶ John Emmons.

This is where God-pleasing faith begins, by recognizing our weakness. As long as we foolishly think we're strong, we'll never see how great He is, and therefore, we'll never exercise real faith in the real world. Sunday faith, maybe, but not real faith.

And this is why He sends us into the hard cases, for the hard case reveals, like nothing else can, the true condition of our faith.

The first potential outcome of a hard case? We see our weakness. Are you feeling weak right now? That can be a good thing. If. If we don't stop there. A second outcome is needed, the one we see in the next scene.

II. We see His sufficiency (20-27).

Notice again Jesus' command at the end of verse 19 (NIV), "Bring the boy to me." It's amazing to watch our Master. He's heading for the cross, but He takes time to help a boy in need. Barclay puts it this way, "He had come into the world to save the world, and yet he could give himself in his entirety to the helping of one single person."⁷

Frankly, it's much easier to preach to sinners in a crowd and tell them that God loves them, than it is to show God's love to one not-so-very-lovely sinner. And that's what Jesus did, on purpose. He walked right into this messy, tense, tension-filled hard case.

Why? In so doing, He revealed that hard cases don't drain Him, they don't wear Him out, like they do us. Rather, they reveal His matchless sufficiency for all to see.

In the following scene, we learn about Jesus' sufficiency by watching what He did, first with the father, and then with the mute boy.

A. Jesus taught the father about faith (20-24). Verse 20 (NIV)—"So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth." In his commentary, R. Alan Cole remarks, "It was the impotent rage of the defeated enemy, an unwilling acknowledgment of the status and authority of Jesus."⁸

In verse 21 (NIV), "Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?' 'From childhood,' he answered." Keep in mind Jesus doesn't ask questions for His own sake. The all-knowing Savior doesn't need information. When He asks a question, it's for teaching purposes.

In verse 22 (NIV) the father continues his answer, "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him." Take a close look at the words of this father, for we seem to have lost sight these days of what this dad knew all too well. The evil one is a killer.

Satan and his wicked imps have one agenda when it comes to mankind. To destroy. The devil seeks to enslave, trap, hurt, and ultimately kill men and women, boys and girls.

If a killer enters your neighborhood, you're going to take steps to keep him out of your house, aren't you? You're going to be vigilant. You're going to lock your doors and windows for you know your life is at stake.

The truth is, there is a killer in our neighborhoods, the evil one himself. What kind of precautions are we taking to defend ourselves and our families? Are you memorizing God's Word and putting on the armor of God? Ephesians 6:11 tells us plainly we need God's armor in order to "take our stand against the devil's schemes."

Note that word "schemes." The devil uses subtle tactics to attack our families. He doesn't shout, "Here I am! You better lock your door if you don't want me to enter!" He masquerades. He captivates. He seeks to appear innocent. He uses *schemes*.

⁷ Barclay, p. 216.

⁸ R. Alan Cole, p. 216.

What kind of schemes? The term is plural for his approach is multifaceted. He uses lots of things to distract us from thinking about the Lord and what we have if we know the Lord (our armor). Like what? A powerful scheme he's using today is entertainment. It frightens me to see how little discernment we often use in our choices of the movies we watch, the music we listen to, and the material we read.

We live in a culture that not only practices evil, but glorifies evil. Yet our Savior calls us to walk in the light, not the darkness. How can we call something entertainment when it glorifies that for which He died? Jesus died for fornicators and adulterers and liars and blasphemers and drunkards. He died to set people free from their sins. How can we who have been set free choose to bring right into our living rooms and car stereos the very sins that once enslaved us, and call it *entertainment*?

See his intention, my friend. See that boy rolling on the ground, foaming at the mouth. The evil one is a killer, and he's intent on destroying us.

You say, "Can we resist him?" Yes, but a Sunday-faith won't do. It takes *real faith*, as Paul makes clear when he says in Ephesians 6:16, "In addition to all this, take up the *shield of faith*, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

Trying to withstand the devil with a Sunday faith is like going into battle with a plastic sword. If we want to stand, we can, but we must take up the *shield of faith*. Jesus defeated the evil one at the cross and by trusting in Jesus, we can stand. Real faith is like a bulletproof shield.

Perhaps you're thinking, "I'm not sure I have that kind of faith. Is there hope for me?" Yes, there's hope. You're not alone. Watch what Jesus did with the father in our story.

In verse 22 the father speaks to Jesus and says (NIV), "But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Here's a father who certainly isn't a faith hero. He's got more doubts than hopes at this point. But notice how Jesus helped him.

Verse 23, "And Jesus said to him, 'If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.'" Faith doesn't use qualifiers like "if." We either believe or we don't believe, and if we believe *everything is possible*.

Be careful. Many have abused this verse, ripping it from its context. Some teach that faith can control God, that if you believe something hard enough then God must respond. You can manipulate God if your faith is strong enough. But, as Hughes observes, "That is man-made, man-centered religion. The fact is, faith must never go farther than God's clear promises, for 'whatever goes beyond God's Word is not faith, but something else assuming its appearance.'"⁹

Interestingly, the disciples had *expected* the boy to be healed by their efforts. They were surprised when the boy wasn't healed. Faith is not simply expecting something to happen. It's more than that.

I love verse 24. I can relate to verse 24, can't you? "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'" What a great response, one that teaches us that we have three needs if we lack real faith.

1. *We need more than verbal faith.* There's a difference between *saying* you believe in the Lord and truly believing Him.

It's like this. Suppose I had a headache and went to the medicine cabinet and grabbed a bottle of medicine. Suppose I read the instructions and reasoned, "I'm sure this is true. I

⁹ Kent Hughes, p. 25; also includes quote by Alexander Maclaren used by Hughes.

believe what I'm reading. I know this medicine will relieve my headache, if I just take it."

Have I exhibited real faith? You can't tell yet, can you? All I've exhibited so far is Sunday faith, a verbal faith.¹⁰ Words are fine, just inadequate. When faith is genuine, there will be more. There will be a specific action taken, the one exhibited by the father.

"I believe!" he said. "Help my unbelief!" Here's the specific action.

2. *We need to face our doubts.* If you have doubts, don't try to hide them. Face them. Bring them to Jesus. As this dad did. I love his transparency. There's no pretense. Just a plain, simple request. Help my unbelief. This is our need.

3. *We need Jesus to help us overcome our unbelief.* It's why He orchestrated the hard case in the first place, to fire a faith worth more than gold, to borrow a line from Keith & Kristyn Getty's song.

*When trials come no longer fear
For in the pain our God draws near
To fire a faith worth more than gold
And there his faithfulness is told
And there his faithfulness is told¹¹*

Perhaps right now you're in the midst of a faith struggle. If so, be encouraged. What you're about to see can cause your faith to grow today. Look carefully.

B. Jesus demonstrated why we can believe Him (25-27). "And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit." Stop there and please note that crowds don't necessarily mean success. For Jesus, this crowd meant it was time to move on.

So 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.'"

The result? Verse 26 says, "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.'"

Uh oh. Did Jesus fail too, as His disciples had? He most certainly had not. And to remove all doubt, notice verse 27, "But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose."

Right here's the antidote for a faith struggle. Why can we believe in Jesus? Here are three reasons.

1. *He is powerful.* He simply commanded the evil spirit to leave, and it left, no questions asked. The shriek and the violent convulsion indicate the spirit didn't leave gladly, but he left.

Friends, the evil one doesn't give up ground without a fight. That's why if we want to have a life and a family that's going God's way, we are in for a battle. If we go with the flow, he won't resist us. But live God's way, and he'll scratch and claw to hold his ground. Can he thwart the Lord's agenda for us? No way. The Lord is powerful.

2. *He is compassionate.* The Lord "took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet." Do you see the Savior's great affection in that touch? After the demon left, the boy looked dead. But when he opened his eyes, he saw the most loving eyes he'd ever seen. Do you remember that touch? Do you remember when the Lord set you free from the death-grip of the evil one?

¹⁰ Illustration adapted from - [Dr. Harlan Roper, Tape on James, Dallas, Texas.](#)

¹¹ When Trials Come - Keith & Kristyn Getty

He's powerful, my friend. And compassionate too. And there's a third reason you can trust Him.

3. *He finishes what He starts.* The healing occurred in two stages. First, Jesus rebuked the demon and the boy was set free. But he lay there lifeless. Then, Jesus lifted the boy to his feet. He gave him a life to live. There are no halfway measures with Jesus, for "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:6)."

So what's the Lord up to when He allows us to confront the hard cases, and at times, our *failures*? Three potential outcomes. We've discussed two so far. He wants us to see our weakness, and then secondly, His sufficiency. Here's the third, in scene three.

III. We see how much we need Him (28-32).

In the final scene, Jesus makes two realities perfectly clear for us.

A. We aren't sufficient (28-29). Notice verse 28, "And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?'"

They'd done it before. Perhaps that was part of the problem, their previous success in casting out demons. When Jesus first called the apostles, He gave them authority to drive out demons (Mark 3:15). And they did. Mark 6:13 says, "They [the disciples] drove out many demons."

You say, "Why would previous success make them fail this time?"

Perhaps they'd been reading their own news reports too much, and had forgotten how it was they'd been able to cast out demons in the first place. It wasn't due to technique, or their own strength. It was due to His power.

There's a lesson here. God gives us gifts. But we're in trouble when we stop depending on Him. The gift isn't enough without dependence upon the Giver.

Perhaps God has given you the ability to preach, or sing, or counsel hurting people, or administrate, or whatever. These are wonderful abilities. But we're in trouble if we try to do them in our own strength. And our wise Savior reminds us of this from time to time, by allowing us to face, and at times even *fail* when facing, the hard case.

Why did the disciples fail? Jesus said it was because they hadn't done something.

Notice verse 29, "And he said to them, 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.'" Apparently there are different kinds of demons, some more powerful than others. And how is this type removed?

Only by prayer. Do you see the contrast in Mark 9? Why did Jesus go up on the mountain? *To pray* (Luke 9:28). What had His disciples failed to do? *To pray.*

Why didn't they pray? I don't know, but think back to what just happened to these men. Only a week or so earlier, Jesus had dropped a bombshell, announcing He was going to be killed, and that they too had a cross to bear. What happened during the days that followed the text doesn't say. We are told that Jesus took the inner circle up on the mount for the transfiguration. It's possible the other nine disciples were "in a kind of stupor of bewilderment," to use the words of J. D. Jones.¹² That announcement of the cross stunned them, took the wind out of their sales.

So perhaps it was a mixture of overconfidence *and* disillusionment. Whatever the reason, this was the result. The disciples failed to pray, and therefore the disciples *failed*.

Beloved, this is Christianity 101. We are not sufficient. We need Him.

¹² Jones, p. 305.

1. *If we really believe that, we'll pray.* We'll talk to Him. Continually. To not do so reveals what we really think about Him (that He's optional), about ourselves (that we can handle things all by ourselves), and about our faith (a failure to pray reveals a faith that's weak or non-existent).

Matthew's account offers an important insight. We read in Matthew 17:19-20, "Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' He replied, '*Because you have so little faith...*'"

That's interesting. So which was it, the lack of *prayer* or the lack of *faith*? They go hand in hand, don't they? If we really believe that God is sufficient, and we are not, then we'll exhibit faith by praying. Furthermore...

2. *If we pray, we'll see Him do what He alone can do.* J. D. Jones elaborates on the connection between faith and prayer. "You cannot omit prayer, and keep faith. For what is prayer? It is the meeting of spirit with spirit. It is man communing with God. It is the mortal laying hold upon the eternal. It is man talking with God; yes, and God talking with man. Now if anyone neglects prayer, if he does not speak to God, and hear God speak to him, God becomes vague, distant, unreal to him. He loses his sense of God, his assurance of the presence of God, the resistless force and power the assurance of God's presence always brings. And losing his hold of God, he becomes impotent and paralyzed."¹³

Faith isn't static, beloved. Faith must be cultivated through the use of spiritual disciplines, including consistent time in prayer.

We are not sufficient. This is reality #1, and it never changes. Nor does this.

B. We need a Savior (30-32). Not just a tutor, or mentor, or friend, but a *Savior*. Notice verse 30, "They went on from there and passed through Galilee." Where is Jesus taking them? He is heading, as He has been since He came into the world, to an appointment in Jerusalem.

"And he did not want anyone to know," says Mark, who then records in verse 31, "for he was teaching his disciples." It was the Lord's plan to turn His ministry over to these twelve men. Based on what just happened, it is obvious they aren't ready yet, so Jesus begins to devote the remainder of His time on earth almost exclusively to these men, to teach them.

And what did He teach them? Something quite shocking. Verse 31b, "Saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.'" This is Jesus' second overt prediction that He's going to die, and then conquer death (see 8:31 for the first).

How did this prediction affect the disciples? In two ways, according to verse 32. "But they did *not understand* the saying, and were *afraid* to ask him." So they didn't understand. And they were afraid.

Why were they afraid to ask Jesus to clarify what He meant? Maybe it's because they remember what happened the last time Jesus brought up this subject (8:31), how Peter rebuked Jesus for suggesting He was going to do, and was immediately rebuked by Jesus (8:32-33). So this time they chose a different subject, namely, they started arguing about which of them was the greatest, as we'll see next week, the Lord willing, in verses 33-34.

This is critical, dear friends. The Lord is teaching His men something we desperately need to learn. First, we aren't sufficient. Second, we need a Savior who can do two things.

¹³ J. D. Jones, p. 306.

1. *We need Him to teach us.* You say, “How can He teach us? He’s not here?” That’s why He taught these men, the twelve, who passed on His teaching to us in the New Testament. But we need more than His teaching.

2. *We need Him to save us.* In verse 31 Jesus introduces a new piece of information regarding His suffering. He mentions His *betrayal*. The verb *paradidotai* is a futuristic present, suggesting that although the betrayal was still in the future, it was happening in the present. The word can be translated “to be delivered up” or “to be handed over.” It could well refer to Jesus’ being delivered up *by God*.¹⁴

This is why He came, to go to the cross and die in the place of sinners, and thereby provide salvation for all who would repent and place their faith in Him. To fire a faith worth more than gold.

Make It Personal: When the hard cases come...

So are you in the middle of a hard situation, wondering what to do? Here’s the way forward, three steps, one at a time.

1. *Let’s admit that we are insufficient.*
2. *Let’s affirm that He is sufficient.*
3. *Let’s ask Him for help with our unbelief.*

Closing Song: #210 “*Jesus, Paid It All*” (all four verses)

Benediction of the month: 2 Corinthians 13:14

Community Group Discussion:

1. What’s the hardest situation you’ve ever faced in life? What did you learn about the Lord from it? What did you learn about yourself?
2. This morning’s message from Mark 9:14-32 was entitled, “*How the Lord Uses the Hard Cases to Teach Us.*” Take time to read this important passage again. Which character in the story most intrigues you, and why?
3. What happened to the disciples in verses 14-19? What did they learn about themselves in this experience? What did they learn about Jesus?
4. What happened to the father in verses 21-24? What did he learn about himself in this experience? What did he learn about Jesus?
5. What do we learn about unbelief/faith from this account? To answer this question, pay close attention to Jesus’ question in verse 19, Jesus’ instruction for the father in verses 23-24, and Jesus’ explanation to His disciples in verse 29.
6. What do we learn about failure from this story that ought to encourage us greatly?

¹⁴ As commentators as early as Origen have interpreted; Wessel, p. 704.