



Mark 9

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Tape #8037
By Chuck Smith

Shall we turn to Mark's gospel chapter nine as we continue our journey through the Bible. Jesus is in the area of Caesarea Philippi which is the very northernmost part of the nation of Israel. Caesarea Philippi was right at the base of Mount Herman. It is there that Jesus asked His disciples who men said that He was, and they gave to Him the various opinions that were being shared. Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am? And Peter answered and said, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15,16).

We read in Mark 8:31 that He then began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed. And after three days, rise again. And He spake that saying openly and Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. Jesus has just talked about His death. Remember that the disciples are expecting Him to set up His kingdom. They are convinced You are the Messiah. And according to the Jewish tradition, the Messiah was to establish the kingdom of God here on earth. He was to reign over the earth in power, in glory, the whole world was to become a subject of His. Psalm 2, "Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for thine inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). And throughout the Old Testament, the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

So upon Peter's acknowledgment, You are the Messiah, then Jesus began to talk about His death. And after three days, His resurrection. This was very upsetting to their concept of the Messiah. And they were no doubt very shaken by these words of Jesus. But in verse thirty-eight, the last verse of chapter eight, He then talks about "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." So He's speaking about His coming again. Coming in the glory of the Father with his holy angels. This time, He's going to die. But after three days, He will rise, but He will be coming again with the holy angels.

And so he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there some of you that are standing here, that will not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God coming with power (9:1).

This is forming in their minds a real enigma. How can He talk about dying and still talk about the coming of His kingdom and power? To their minds, it was just totally confusing. They couldn't put these things together. It is interesting that though they were totally confused on how He could die and yet enter into the kingdom, and to them it was as an enigma, yet think of again that thief on the cross who saw Jesus as He was dying, and said unto Him, Lord, when You come into Your kingdom, will You remember me? That's amazing. How that the thief on the cross seemed to grasp what His own disciples could not grasp. That even through death He was going to come into His kingdom. And here He is giving the indication of that, talking about His death, but now He says, There are some of you that are standing here, you're not going to die until you see the kingdom of God coming with power. He no doubt was referring to the event that next took place, and that is,

His taking Peter, James and John into the heights of Mount Herman where He was transfigured before them (9:2).

The word "transfigured" is sort of metamorphosed or the change of body. And so He went through this metamorphosis.

And his raiment became shining, exceeding the whiteness of snow (9:3);

The shining is as the sun shines in its glory or strength and the whiteness of His garment,
so as no fuller on earth can white them (9:3).

The fuller was more or less the laundry man of that day. They did not have soaps, they used alkalis for the most part in the cleaning of clothes. They would put them in the running streams and they would hire little fellows to just stomp on them to get out the dirt and it would flow away in the stream and they would use caustics and various alkalis to get the dirt out and then they would dry them in the sun, bleaching them out in the sun. And of course, the idea then as is now, to keep the whites white. And so the success of the fuller, the laundry man, was to see how white he could make your clothes. But it was white than any fuller could white them or bleach them.

And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses (9:4):

Elijah was the man of the Old Testament who stood at the head of the prophets. And when you think of Elijah, you think of the prophets. Moses, he was the one who brought the law. Now the Old Testament is basically divided into the law and the prophets, God's messengers. God's message to man through the law, God's message to man through the prophets who were exhorting them to keep the law. And so Moses, the representative of the law, they heard Moses. They listened to Moses. They would read the works of Moses, the Torah. It was sacred to them and they had listened to the word of God through Moses. They had listened to the prophets and they would read the prophets in the synagogue. And so they were used to hearing Moses, they were used to hearing Elijah.

Now one of the other gospels tells us that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about His death that He was to accomplish there in Jerusalem. They were talking about the coming crucifixion and His rising again. And so, "there appeared Moses and Elijah,"

talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it's good for us to be here: let us make three tents or tabernacles; one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. For he did not know what to say; and they were very afraid (9:4-6).

Isn't that so typical? You don't know what to say so you feel you got to say something and you say something stupid. When you don't know what to say, you'd be better off just to keep your mouth shut. Say nothing if you don't know what to say. Someone said, Better to keep silent and to let people think you're a fool, than open your mouth and remove all doubts. So here is Peter, don't know what to say, they're frightened, this is a terrifying kind of an experience to them, and let's just make three tabernacles. Let's stay here, don't want to go down the hill, let's just stay in this place of experience, of glorious experience, the experiencing of seeing Your power, Your glory, Lord, want to stay here.

We oftentimes have those wonderful revelations of the Lord to our hearts, to our lives. We have those experiences like so many of the young people experience at the summer camps this summer. And you feel like, don't want to go home. I want to stay right here, I want to stay here where the Lord has met me. I want to stay here in this place of inspiration where my heart has been touched by God. Don't want to go back to the worldly, mundane things. I want to just stay. But these experiences that we have, these mountaintop type of spiritual experiences have to be then translated in the everyday experience. If your spiritual experiences do not have a practical working out in your everyday life, then they really have no value. They're just glorious spiritual experiences, but that's not the purpose. The purpose is that they might be worked out in your daily life, among the routine daily things, that this work that God has done, the special work of God has its outworking in the natural, normal, everyday situations.

Now there was a cloud that overshadowed them (9:7):

God's presence was most generally symbolized by a cloud, you remember in the Old Testament that there was the cloud that came down in the tabernacle signifying the presence of God. And then when they built the temple, the cloud came down in the temple and thus it was the symbol of God's presence among the people. And the rabbis believed that when the Messiah came, there would be a cloud that would cover Him, again, as the symbol of God's presence among the people. And so there was this cloud that came down, overshadowed them,

a voice came out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son: hear him (9:7).

Now they had heard Moses, they had heard Elijah and the prophets, now God is saying, hear Him. In Hebrews chapter one, it said, "God, who at different times and in different ways spoke to our fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his own dear Son, whom he has made heir of all things; Who is the brightness of his glory, and the outshining of the glory" (Hebrews 1:1-3) and so forth. So that God is saying hear Him. Here's the revelation. You want to know what God is like? You want to have an idea of the character and nature of God? Look at Jesus, listen to Jesus. He is God's final revelation to man of Himself. Jesus said, "Have I been so long a time with you, Philip, haven't you seen me? Don't you realize that if you have seen me you have seen the Father? How sayest thou then, Show us the Father" (John 14:9)? So He is the revelation of God, God's final revelation of Himself to man in Jesus Christ. And of course, in Him is revealed the tremendous love of God for us.

Suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, except Jesus with themselves (9:8).

Moses, Elijah disappeared, the cloud disappeared and Jesus is there with them, it's been a glorious, inspirational experience. But they've come down now from the mountain, as we have to.

And as they were coming down, he charged them that they should not tell any man what things they had seen, till the Son of man was risen from the dead (9:9).

Here again, risen from the dead, what do You mean? But He's telling them, don't tell any man about this until I'm risen from the dead.

And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning with another what the rising of the dead should mean (9:10).

What does He mean by that? What does He keep talking about? Death and rising from the dead, doesn't He know He's the Messiah? Supposed to set up the kingdom.

And so they asked him (9:11),

He's talking about rising from the dead and the questions of the Messiah and they asked Him,

saying, Why is it that the scribes tell us that Elijah must first come (9:11)?

In the book of Malachi, it was prophesied that Elijah would come and would prepare the way for the Messiah, turning the hearts of the children to the fathers. In fact, the very last promise of the Old Testament there in Malachi is that promise of the coming of Elijah before the Messiah. Verse five of Malachi four, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD: He will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and

smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5,6). So the scribes were teaching, Elijah is going to come and the Jews believed that Elijah is going to come. In the Passover meal that they have, the empty chair at the table is for Elijah. They leave the door open, they go and look down the street to see if Elijah might be coming. Part of the tradition of the Passover feast that they have. So the expectation of the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy. And so the disciples said the scribes are telling us that Elijah has to first come.

And he answered and told them, Elijah verily does come first, [he is going to come first], and restore all things; [but then Jesus said] but how is it that it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought (9:12).

In other words, they were looking at the prophecies of the second coming of Jesus. And before Jesus comes again, Elijah will come and there will be a spiritual revival among the Jews. In Revelation chapter eleven, he speaks of the two witnesses that come. And surely one of them will be Elijah. And the other one we don’t know, possibly Moses, but we know that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11. So they are looking at that coming and Jesus says, But yet how is it that it also declares that the Son of man or the Messiah must suffer many things, and be set at nought. “He is despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief: and we as it were hid our faces from him; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; turned every one of us to our own ways, God laid on him the iniquities of us all” (Isaiah 53:3-6). How is it that the prophet say concerning the Messiah, that he is going to be set at nought? He’s going to be rejected.

So Jesus is pointing out that there has to be two comings in order to fulfill all of the prophecies. There has to be first of all, the setting at nought before He comes in power and glory to reign over the earth. But He answered and said, I say unto you that Elijah verily cometh first. He’s going to come first and restore all things. It’s written of the Son of man that He must suffer and be set at nought.

But I say unto you, That Elijah has indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it was written of him (9:13).

So He is speaking of John the Baptist and John the Baptist came in the spirit and the power of Elijah. That was the word of the angel Gabriel to his father, Zacharias as he was ministering in the temple and he told him that his wife, Elizabeth, in her old age, was going to bear a son, he was to call his name John, and he would go in the spirit and in the power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the people. And so the prophecy concerning John the Baptist, spirit and power of Elijah. They did ask John in John chapter one, they asked him, Are you Elijah? He said no. Are you the prophet? No. Then who are you? I’m just the voice of one in the wilderness crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. So he wasn’t the complete fulfillment of the prophecy but he was in the spirit and in the power of Elijah. So sort of a little bit of an enigma there but there is yet the coming of Elijah, that fulfillment of that prophecy is yet future. And Jesus was pointing that out yet. If you can accept it in the spiritual sense, John was and he did come and he was the forerunner. But they’ve done to him what was written of him.

And so when they got back down the hill, they got back down to the other nine disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes were questioning [the word there in the Greek is disputing] with them (9:14).

There was a big argument going on.

And immediately all of the people, when they saw Jesus, were greatly amazed, and they came running and greeted him (9:15).

Here they come at the bottom of the hill, there's this argument going on, scribes are there, laying heavy trips on the disciples.

And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which has a mute spirit; And wherever he takes him, he tears him: and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him to me (9:17-19).

Faithless generation. There were the scribes, no faith in Jesus at all. It was a deliberate blinding of their eyes to His truth. There were the disciples, weak in their faith but wanting to believe. And the father who was also sort of without faith at this moment because of the failure of the disciples to help his son. The symptoms sound like a grandmal seizure but it was not grandmal seizures that this boy was having. That would be a very cruel thing to say because that would imply that grandmal seizures are the result of demon possession and that is not so. It would be extremely cruel to anybody who had epilepsy to think that the epilepsy was caused by a demonic activity. It's caused by a problem within the brainwaves. It is a purely physical thing and it is wrong to assume or to declare that this boy was having grandmal seizures. Note he was also mute. But this demon, unclean spirit, that possessed his body was seeking to destroy him.

And so the father brought him unto Jesus: and when he saw him, immediately the spirit tore him; he fell on the ground, and he was wallowing and foaming. And Jesus asked the father, How long ago since this came into him? And he said, When he was just a child. And oftentimes it has cast him in the fire, and into the water, to destroy him: but if you can do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us (9:20-22).

Jesus said concerning Satan that the enemy has come to rob, to kill and to destroy. Sin is destructive. The end result of sin is death. It destroys. And that is why God has commanded against sin because it is destructive. Here the demon manifesting the intent of Satan, and that is the destruction of the person, seeking to destroy the boy by casting him into the water to drown him, or into the fire to burn him, to cremate him. Pitiful, pitiful sight. The boy can't speak but there he is on the ground wallowing, foaming from the mouth, and the father begging Jesus saying, If you can do anything. The disciples could not do anything and now he is questioning even the ability of Jesus. If you can do anything. It's interesting that the disciples had been out, they were given power to cast out demons and they came back and were rejoicing over the fact that even the demons are subject unto us as we command them in Your name. But here is one that was not subject unto them. And thus the father questioning, If you can do anything, please have compassion, help us. And Jesus turned it around.

He said, If you can believe (9:23),

He is saying to Jesus, If you can; and Jesus says, Well if you can. If you can believe,

all things are possible to him that believeth. And immediately the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe (9:23,24);

but being real honest, he admits that there are some doubts,

help my unbelief (9:24).

Lord, take care of that area of doubt that is there. I do believe, help me Lord in the area of doubts.

When Jesus saw the people running together (9:25),

The crowds started cramming and something like this, it attracts a crowd. Here's this little boy

wallowing on the ground and people come running now out of curiosity. And Jesus saw the crowd running together, and

he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You mute and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him (9:25).

Now Jesus taught that when an evil spirit was driven forth, it would go in throughout the world looking for another body to inhabit. And finding none would often come back to the body from which it was cast and if it finds it all swept and garnished, nothing there to replace what had been taken away, he'll go out and get seven other spirits and the last state of the person would be much worse than the first. So Jesus is commanding this spirit to leave and don't enter again.

There are a lot of people that come to the Lord only for the perks, only for the benefits but not really to have their life controlled by and filled with the Spirit of God. All they want is help. I have a problem, I want a solution, I have a difficulty, I want an answer. I don't want to surrender my life, I don't want my life to be filled with the Lord, I just want help from this problem. Dangerous place to be. When something goes out, you can't leave the void. You've got to fill it or something else even worse will come in. So here the commandment to leave and never to enter again.

And the spirit cried, and tore him sore (9:26),

Probably a great convulsion and the mute, he cried out,

and he was then lying there as though he was dead (9:26);

it would just leave him, the little boy, limp, lying there as though he were dead. In fact,

many people said, He died. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, How come we couldn't do that? And Jesus said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (9:27-29).

They were unable. Notice here the fact that this particular demon that was possessing this boy evidently was a powerful demon and they are ranked in various degrees of power and authority, principalities, powers and all, rankings. They had known what it was to cast out demons but here was one that resisted all of their endeavors of exorcism. And so when they saw Jesus delivering the boy, they said, Lord, how come we couldn't do this? Notice how that when the boy was being brought to Jesus that the demon threw him on the ground. And there went through a little demonstration right there as the boy was wallowing and foaming. And probably the same kind of thing happened when they brought the boy to the disciples, that the demon manifested itself. And it is possible that the disciples were so overawed by the power of the demon to control that little boy that they lost sight of the power of Jesus to deliver him.

I think that many times we get into situations where we become so awed by the problem, by the situation that we lose sight of the power of God that is so much greater. We shouldn't be awed by the powers of darkness. We shouldn't be alarmed or fearful. And so the disciples, powerless in this state, or in this particular case, but Jesus said, this kind takes prayer and fasting.

And they departed from there, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it (9:30).

He was trying to just pass through secretly. They're getting ready to go on down to Jerusalem where He is to be crucified. He has been talking to them now and revealing to them the fact that the crucifixion is

coming. And so He is seeking now just to spend quality time with the disciples because He is soon going to be leaving all of the things into their care. Imagine how He must feel right now. These are the fellows that I'm going to give the keys to the kingdom. I'm going to turn the work and here they're failing right here already. They fail this test with this demon. They are the ones and so He is no doubt feeling an urgency to really get them qualified and built up. So He was trying to pass through rather privately,

For he taught his disciples (9:31),

And this was His purpose, quality time with them to teach them. He taught them that,

The Son of man was to be delivered into the hands of men, and they would kill him; and after he is killed, he will rise the third day (9:31).

Again, talking about this. Now remember on the mount as He was coming down with Peter, James and John, He was talking about don't tell anybody until I'm risen. And they said, What does He mean by that? What's He talking about rising from the dead? And so again now, He's talking to them about His death and resurrection.

But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him (9:32).

Peter got in trouble earlier, he rebuked the Lord for talking about His death and all and Jesus rebuked him. And so they're afraid to ask the Lord to explain what He's talking about. They still do not understand.

And when they came to Capernaum [sort of His headquarters in the Galilee]: and being in the house he asked them, What were you arguing about among yourselves in the way (9:33)?

While they were coming down there was this big argument, coming back from Caesarea it's probably fifty, sixty miles. And so the disciples were in this argument. So when they came in the house, He said, What were you guys arguing about?

But they held their peace: for in the way they were arguing among themselves, who would be the greatest (9:34).

Now imagine, here's Jesus talking about I'm going to go and die, I'm going to rise again, and they don't understand. So they're arguing, Who's going to be the greatest, I'm going to be the greatest, not you man, me. Look at the way He looks at me, He trusts me, doesn't really trust you. And they're arguing about this. Still thinking that He's going to set up His kingdom immediately. They just did not understand. No wonder He said to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said" (Luke 24:25).

And so he sat down, and he called the twelve, and he said, If any of you desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and the servant of all. And he took a child, and he set the child in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them (9:35,36),

So He took a little child. Took him up in His arms, and He said,

Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receives me: and whoever receives me, receives not me, but him that sent me (9:37).

The ministry to a child, so important. We think we want to minister to the vast multitudes. Jesus said, Take a child, minister to the child and in receiving a little child in my name, you're receiving me, and in

receiving me, you're receiving the Father. They were looking for greatness for themselves. And Jesus said, The path to greatness is the path of service. If you want to be great in the kingdom of God, then become the servant of all. That night in which He was betrayed, when He took the towel and He went around and washed their feet, He said, Do you see what I have done? Oh yeah, Lord, we see. You call me Lord and Master and that's correct, I am. But if I being your Lord and Master wash your feet, then you ought to wash one another's feet. The place of the service, serving one another. You want to be great in the kingdom, be the servant.

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in your name, and he didn't follow us: and so we forbade him, because he didn't follow us (9:38).

John's trying to start a denomination. Isn't that sad? He didn't follow us. I suppose he was expecting Jesus to say, Good boy, John. They're still vying for greatness in the kingdom. Lord, we forbade him.

And Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me (9:39).

Notice people were discovering the power of the name of Jesus. Here's a man, though he wasn't following with the disciples, yet he was casting our demons in the name of Jesus, discovering the power of the name. "And no man which shall do a miracle in my name can really speak evil of me."

For he that is not against us is on our part. Or whosoever shall give to you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to the Messiah, verily I say unto you, he will not lose his reward (9:40,41).

So again, the idea of service, giving just as much as a cup of water in the name of the Lord.

Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones (9:42)

The child is still here, He's probably still holding the child on His lap. I love the way children were attracted to Jesus. And He was holding this little child on His lap and He said, "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones,"

that believe in me (9:42),

Oh how pure and how beautiful is the faith of a child. How I love to hear their prayers. How I love to talk to them about Jesus and about God. That beautiful simplicity of faith that they possess. But can you imagine a person's, how diabolical the mind of a person must be who would seek to destroy the faith of a child in Jesus? To deliberately try to destroy the faith of a child. Jesus said,

Better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he was cast into the sea (9:42).

A bit of Mafia in Jesus because those millstones must weigh 500 pounds or more. I mean, if you try and destroy the faith of a child, know this, you're going to be facing an angry Lord.

And if your hand offend thee, cut it off (9:43):

Now this is such a difficult, difficult passage. But we have to understand that Jesus is not speaking literally but He is speaking figuratively. He is saying that the most important thing in your whole life, nothing exceeds in importance than your entering the kingdom of heaven. That's the most important thing in your whole life. It's more important than your hand, more important than your eye, more important than anything in all the world. And so He uses very strong kind of shocking words here. "If your hand offends

you, cut it off.”

Better for you to enter into eternal life maimed, than having two hands and going into hell (9:43)

Or Gehenna, this is not the Hades here but it is the Greek word, Gehenna. Gehenna was related to the valley of Hinnom, the valley that runs on the southern side of the city of Jerusalem. It is the valley in which King Ahaz built idols unto the god Molech. And they had the fires, the bonfires and the people would take their unwanted babies and throw them in the bonfires as sacrifices to Molech. They didn't have abortive procedures at those times and so they'd take the live babies and throw them into the fires to Molech. To date we are more refined, we sacrifice the babies to Molech while they're still in the womb; Molech, the god of pleasure. Later Manasseh came along, even more wicked than Ahaz and continued this horrible, horrible practice there in the valley of Hinnom. So that when Josiah came to the throne and he instituted the spiritual reforms, he made the valley of Hinnom the garbage dump for the city. He wanted to make it a profane place, they had worshipped the false gods so he wanted to profane it and so he made it the garbage dump of the city. And all of the garbage of the city was cast into the valley of Hinnom and there was a constant burning of the garbage. Constant smoke coming from the valley of Hinnom as the garbage was burned, the rotting carcass of the animals and so forth were filled with worms and so forth, so that it was a very graphic thing and Jesus uses it to describe the place of punishment for those who have rejected God's love and God's invitation to salvation through Jesus Christ. So “having two hands, go into Gehenna”

into the fire that never shall be quenched (9:43):

Revelation 14 tells us “the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever” (Revelation 14:11).

And if your foot offend you, cut it off: better for you to enter lame into life, than having two feet be cast into Gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye offends you, pluck it out: better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes be cast into Gehenna fire: Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (9:45-48).

When we were back in Toledo, Ohio years ago, I was still in college and this one young fellow that we met asked us if we would like to run traps with him. To make money, he would trap muskrats in the ponds that are so abounding around Toledo and he would catch the muskrats and skin them, put them on boards, tack them on boards and then sell the furs. So we said, Sure, we like to run traps with you so he picked us up at six o'clock and we went out to the pond, started running traps. We came to the first trap and he was in the bushes ahead of us, making his way down to the pond and we heard him when he saw the trap say, Oh, no, and so we said, What's wrong? He said, look and here in the trap was the paw of a muskrat. He said, if you catch them by the paw they'll turn around and chew off their foot and leave it in the trap and get away. He said, they'll do the same thing, catch them by the tail, they'll chew off their tail, leave it and you miss him. And you sort of think, Chewing off your own foot?! But really, the muskrat isn't too dumb. He figures better to have three paws and still be swimming in the pool than having four paws, and being tacked on a board.

And so Jesus is more or less saying that. If there is something in your life that is holding you back from full commitment to God, get rid of it. It may be painful, it may be a severe measure but the most important thing is that we enter into the kingdom of heaven and we've got to get rid of anything that keeps us back from entering into the kingdom of heaven.

Throughout church history, there have been those who have been guilty of mutilating their bodies in order to hopefully overcome certain problems. Oregon had a tremendous problem with lust. And so he castrated himself. But then he later discovered that it didn't solve the problem. He still lusted. So it's not a literal thing. It's spiritual but it is important, and Jesus is stressing how important it is that we enter the

kingdom of heaven, that we escape Gehenna.

For every one shall be salted with fire (9:49),

In the Old Testament sacrifices, those that were to be burned, the sacrifices were to be salted before they were offered. The salt was used as a purifying agent. Without refrigeration, when meat was butchered, it would soon begin to rot. And so to retard the spoilage, they would salt down the meat heavily. The salt killed the surface bacteria and thus preserved the meat. And so in this first one, salt is being looked at as a preservative. Even as fire is a purifier, burning out the dross. And so Jesus is talking about the severe measures that need to sometimes be taken and how that we need that purifying fire of God in our lives to burn out the dross from our lives. "Every one shall be salted with fire," that is, the purifying of the fire.

Peter said, "Beloved, count it not strange concerning the fiery trials which are to try you, as though some strange thing has happened to you" (1 Peter 4:12). He talks about the trials of your faith being "more precious than gold that perishes when it is tried with the fire" (1 Peter 1:7). So the purpose of the fire was to burn out the dross from the gold, to leave that which was pure. And thus, God's fiery trials and all that He sometimes puts us through to get rid of the dross, to get rid of the impurities in our life.

every sacrifice shall be salted with salt (9:49).

That's the Old Testament law. Now He said,

Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his saltiness, wherewith will you season it (9:50)?

There's nothing worse than oats without salt. It's so flat and bland, it's hard to eat. I grew up on oats. Thank God when I was a kid but they did have Wheaties and Cornflakes, but man, you look at the junk today that we're feeding our kids. What a tragedy! I feel sorry for kids today. These quick box sugared cereals. I grew up on whole wheat, oats, whole grains, but every once in a while, my mom would forget to put the salt in the boiling water when she made the oats. And they'd just be so flat. And you pour in all the honey and you still couldn't get rid of that flat taste. Potatoes without salt, just flat and bland. So the salt that's lost its saltiness, you don't use it for seasoning. So He said,

Have salt within yourselves, and have peace one with the other (9:50).

This is sort of a takeoff from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said, You are the salt of the earth: if the salt has lost its savour [or saltiness], wherewith will it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under the foot of men (Matthew 5:13). The Christian is to be a purifying influence in the world like salt, used as a purifier. Preventing rottenness but also the Christian should be bringing spice and flavor to life.

The Christian life is not a dull, bland kind of a thing. It's a glorious, exciting thing and we should be bringing flavor to men. I've often said--and I'm too late this year, I know, unless you take a vacation and go back and see the changing leaves in New England--I've often said be sure to accept Christ before you go on vacation. You'll be amazed at how much more beautiful things are when you see them through the eyes of Christ. In touch with the Creator, in fellowship with the Creator, the heavens are a deeper blue, the earth is a deeper green. Something glows in every hue that Christless eyes have never seen. Unless you have Christ in your heart, you've never seen the beauty, the true beauty of creation. The Christian life brings zest, it brings flavor to everything. I'm so glad I belong to Jesus.

Father, we thank You for your word and we pray that it indeed will be a light unto our path, that we'll walk in its light and in your truth. Lord, your word is true, teach us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

