

Life's Challenges

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[0 : 0 0] so in turning to this passage in in mark chapter 9 but our equivalent chapters equivalent passages in the other gospels but our reading is from mark the mark version but i think we need to look back also to part of chapter 8. so to begin circumstances in life can often put us through real court a real roller coaster ride of emotions this can be due to external circumstances such as work relationships ill health moving house and even issues in church itself we are always happy to experience the highs and the good times but then these can be followed often unexpectedly by anxiety worry and even the depths of despair paul states in his letter to the philippines i have learned to be content whatever the circumstances i know what it is to be in need and i know what it is to have plenty i've learned the secret of being content in any and every situation whether well fed or hungry whether living in plenty or in want i can do everything through him who gives me strength in our lesson this evening we find the disciples going through a real roller coaster of emotions and the circumstances that face them which brings me to my first heading peter's ups and downs where i concentrate initially on peter himself although our lesson is taken primarily from primarily from chapter 9 of mark we need to refer back to the previous chapter chapter 8 where we see peter's shift from a position of praise to a position of being criticized from praise to criticism from praise as we find in in verse 29 of the chapter 8 of the previous chapter and if that is read alongside the equivalent passage in matthew chapter 16 we find this jesus asks the question of peter but what about you peter he asked who do you say i am who do you say i am peter answered you are the messiah and after jesus had asked the question we read in the matthew passage peter's response you are the christ or messiah the son of the living god and following that response jesus praised peter which was a high point jesus replied blessed are you simon son of jonah for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood but my by my father in heaven and and i tell you that you are peter and on this rock i will build my church and the gates of hades will not overcome it this was a boost to peter of course peter's name and french is pierre and pierre is the word for rock a play on words from praise very quickly we read in that passage in chapter 8 we moved on to criticism because in verses

31 to 33 of that same chapter we find that Jesus was teaching his disciples teaching them that the son of man must suffer many things be rejected by the elders by the chief priests and by the teachers of the law and it says that he must be killed not that he will be killed but that he must be killed because he was about to do his father's will and after three days he would rise again this was uncomfortable for Peter and he sought to challenge Jesus and he took Jesus aside in private and began to rebuke him Peter rebuking Jesus but then Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and openly presumably rebuked Peter get behind me Satan he said from being praised to being criticized or being rebuked Peter therefore went from rock to stumbling block as it as the passage in Matthew describes it from going from on this rock I will build my church to you are a stumbling block to me get behind me Satan and then there was this going from having an understanding that was given to him from God to an understanding by man again a criticism for this was not revealed to you by man but by my father in heaven it went from that to you have in mind the things of men so his position again his ego had been affected his esteem would have been lowered from looking forward to being part of an earthly kingdom perhaps to being told of a dying king from thinking that they would rule with Jesus in an earthly kingdom and Jesus being on an earthly throne to being told that their leader Jesus must be killed there was a going from pride in Peter to humility there would have been a downward spiral of a spiral of emotion whilst the disciples were grappling with the thought of the impending loss of Jesus this Jesus was talking about his death and what was to come as if that wasn't bad enough Jesus started talking about them losing their lives about potentially forfeiting their soul and taking up their cross about tasting death how much more of this could they take have you ever ever experienced such a barrage of knockbacks such a short space of time or being subject subjected to constant criticism or being let down or even exposed to your own failures what is the what is the antidote where is the antidote which brings me to my next heading the mountaintop experience by this time I reckon that Peter in particular and indeed the other closest disciples needed a pick-me-up this was it in chapter 9

and he said to them I tell you the truth some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power before they see the kingdom of God come with power in other words some will see the kingdom of God coming with power before they die perhaps a difference of opinion as to what was meant uh by this some have suggested that it may be at the day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit but more likely is to do with what was about to take place on the mountain because that is where it sits in the context of scripture in verse 2 it says that after six days Jesus took Peter James and John with them and led them up a high mountain where they were all alone and there he was transfigured before them this was likely to be Mount Hermon which is about 14 miles from Caesarea Philippi a fairly dramatic setting uh being above the the sunken Jordan valley uh I read somewhere I can't confirm where but that the mountain can be seen from the Dead Sea about 100 miles away so it was a prominent location but Luke tells us that the purpose of that hell walk was to go to a solitary place to pray this was the purpose of the going up this mountain but only Peter James and John were with Jesus and it was whilst Jesus was praying that Jesus was transfigured there was this change of appearance his face was changed his face shone like the sun and it says his clothes became dazzling white as white as the light if you're ever trying to buy a light bulb you get cool white to get warm white but the whiteness here was a pure white a dazzling white as white as white as the light like a flash of lightning that says in one location or whiter than anyone could bleach them it says in the text here it was an awesome appearance and this was no dream even if it says that Peter James and John were sleepy it was no dream because it says in Luke chapter 9 but when they became fully awake when they became when they became fully awake they saw his glory so it wasn't the dream

Isaiah says in isaiah 53 2 he had no beauty or majesty no beauty or majesty to attract us to him nothing in his appearance that we should desire him as jesus walked talked and ate with his disciples there were no outward marks of his glory other than his loving pure character john describes this john describes jesus this way we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only who came from the father full of grace and truth there are times when we get a glimpse or reflection of jesus glory it can be reflected in the faces of believers when they speak of jesus perhaps someone who was recently been converted and is giving their testimony their faces as it were light up as they speak of their lord and when moises came down from sinai his face shone and he had to cover his face so that those present wouldn't see the glory depart from him but this glory was simply a reflected glory like the splendor of a moon a full moon reflecting the sun's light it's not the glory it's a reflected glory from the sun here on the mountain this was not a reflected glory this was something else this was jesus in all his glory now we see but a pure reflection as in a mirror but then we shall see face to face and we can see that love in christ demonstrated and in what he has done for us on the cross but on this mountain top there was this appearance of moises and elijah the appeared in glorious splendor it says and they were talking to jesus and what were they speaking of they spoke about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfillment in jerusalem in this discussion in this conversation there was a link to the past the past and are looking forward to the future in respect of the past here we see the law and the prophets represented jesus jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it and the prophets spoke of the time when jesus would come they spoke of jesus coming moises moises represented the law or the old covenant and the promise of salvation elijah represented the day of the lord's coming it says in 9 12 of mark one to restore all things it says see i will send you the prophet elijah before that great and dreadful day of the lord when he comes it speaks of the future what they were discussing they spoke about his departure something it was about to happen something it was to be fulfilled at jerusalem and luke 9 31 first of all is about his departure they were not talking they were here obviously talking about the crucifixion it was not about his traveling to jerusalem it was about his crucifixion he would leave

shake off the mortal coil the ultimate example of god's love to a fallen world and the crucifixion and the redeeming sacrifice of jesus this reinforced what jesus had already been teaching his disciples that he must depart he must die it says not that he would die but he must die the talks of the discussion they had between elijah moises and jesus also spoke of fulfillment of prophecy in isaiah we're in isaiah we read but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed we all like sheep have gone astray each of us has turned to his own way and the lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all but even in the height of this incredible experience the disciples were frightened and they didn't know what to say peter he blurted out rabbi it is good for us to be here let us build three shelters one for jesus one for moises and one for elijah what was peter thinking about was it the tent of meeting as in a tabernacle where there was the presence of god was it the booths and as in the feast of tabernacles where it says in leuiticus that they should live in booths for seven days all native-born israelites are to live in booths so that your descendants will know that i made the israelites live in booths when i brought them out of egypt i am the lord your god was this what he was thinking about they really didn't know what to say it says they were going through this roller coaster of emotions there was this excitement there was fear there was exhilaration that what they had experienced and then there was this bright cloud that appeared and this bright cloud enveloped them and they were afraid as they entered this cloud but this cloud reminds us of something in the old testament it reminds us of the cloud by day and the fire by night as israelites were leaving egypt and heading towards the promised land they were led by the presence of god and a voice came from the cloud and a familiar familiar expression i've even heard it this morning this is my son whom i love listen to him the voice said and matthew and his version of this text or of this incident also has with him i am well pleased luke has this is my son whom i have chosen or the chosen one the anointed one what does it remind us of it reminds us of the river jordan when jesus came to be baptized and a voice came from heaven you are my son whom i love with you i am well pleased this voice we have this link between elijah and john the baptist verses 11 and 12 of mark chapter 9 refers to elijah coming first and restores all things in verse 13 elijah has come and they have done to him everything they wished just as is it as it is written about him

[19:17] but the matthew chapter uh matthew version in chapter 17 explains that then the disciples understood he was talking about john the baptist the returned elijah in isaiah 43 to 5 we read this a voice of one calling in the desert prepare the way for the lord make straight in the wilderness a highway for our god every valley shall be raised up every mountain and hill be made low the rough ground shall become level the rugged places are plain and the glory of the lord will be revealed and all mankind together will see it for the mouth of the lord has spoken this is my son whom i love listen to him the father loves the son and the son loves the father and is obedient is obedient to him unto death and god's love is demonstrated to us in the subsequent subsequent sacrifice that jesus made in our stead we deserve the punishment for our sin jesus took upon himself our sin and was sacrificed on the cross this is my son whom i love listen to him listen to him this is not an audience listening to a concert and then going home it is not just a passive hearing that is required it is a matter of active participation with the word listen and put into practice we are not meant to just be hearer of the word but doers of the word also and what was the effect of this voice the disciples fell to the ground terrified but in his sensitivity and in his love jesus came and touched them get up he said don't be afraid when the voice had spoken when they turned turned around jesus was alone no longer was moises and elijah present such an incredible experience and as the disciples would come off the mountaintop physically they would come off the mountaintop emotionally they would come back down to earth which brings us to our final heading the depths of their shared experience the depths of their shared experience peter wasn't the only one who had this mountaintop experience james and john were also there along with peter the three of them james james john and peter were the three described as those esteemed to be pillars as described by paul in galatians 2 9 these three were those closest to jesus and hence the ones most affected they were the ones soon to be in the depths of despair firstly when their lord when jesus was arrested the disciples were there at the garden of gethsemane and they stood there helpless what could they do in the face of the soldiers coming to take jesus away for peter matters were compounded by his denial of his lord three times

where was peter's pride then and then there was a subsequent death of jesus john the disciple the disciple whom jesus loved it is recorded he was present at the crucifixion near the cross of jesus stood his mother his mother sister mary the wife of clopas and mary magdalene when jesus saw his mother there and the disciple whom he loved and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby he said to his mother dear woman here is your son and to the disciple here is your mother from that time on the disciple took her into his home so there at the cross was the disciple whom he loved jesus john referring to himself john would have felt such anguish at seeing his lord hanging there on the cross but no more so than mary the mother of jesus the one who bore him and nurtured jesus from infancy jesus had spoken of his death but there was a stark reality of it before the gathering in front of the cross would the words of jesus in chapter 8 31 be their comfort and in three days he would rise again did they ponder that in their minds did they fully take on board the reality of that they would soon find out the transfiguration gave the disciples a glimpse of the glory of christ but this event was first and foremost directed at the disciples jesus was transfigured before them it was an occasion preparing them for the ordeal that was about to come the passion of christ would be would be seen in the light of his glory the power of the cross certainly would be poured out at pentecost so the transfiguration was preparing these disciples for the ordeal that was to come but for us surely the mountaintop experience for us is when we come to jesus when we come to see him in all his glory whether this be a moment in time or a progressive realization of who he is as we acknowledge jesus as our savior and recognize what he has done for us through the cross as we receive the holy spirit when jesus glory is revealed to us we too can be prepared for the ordeals of life the disciples who are being prepared for what about for what about for what was about to come we too are prepared for the ordeals of life as jesus glory is revealed to us through the holy spirit and we know that all things were together for good to them that love god to them who are called according to his purpose and i finish with this the lord is near do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your request to god and the peace of god which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in christ jesus amen let's turn to to prayer

heavenly father we thank you for the revelation of your scripture but more importantly we thank you for the revelation of jesus we thank you for the outpouring of your holy spirit if we are in christ jesus we are temples of the holy spirit and he lives within us so lord we pray that the revelation of jesus will enable us to live each day in the light of what you have done for us and that whatever is brought before us in providence lord we will be able to know that you are guiding us and leading us and directing us the good of those who love you and are called according to your will will bless us we pray and continue with us and receive our songs of praise as we raise our voices to you in song amen we will do you