

I love the story about a kid who was being bullied at school because he pretended that the talk show host (Jay Leno) was his uncle. ... When Leno learned this... he tracked the kid down and drove him to school in his Lamborghini.

Jay Leno said:

I got a letter one day from a kid saying he was in trouble because he had told his friends that I was his uncle and that we would go driving around in my Lamborghini. And his friends all called him a big liar. He wanted to know if I could give him a ride to school one day in my Lamborghini Countach. It so intrigued me that I called the kid, of course speaking to his mother first, and said, why don't we do this next week?

So, I drove out to where the kid lived and picked him up. Then we waited until the opportune time, when most of the buses are in front of the school and all the kids are hanging out and we pull up in front, the doors go up into the sky, the kid goes, "Bye uncle Jay!" And I go, "OK, Billy, take care, I'll pick you up next week and we'll go driving." And of course, all his friends' mouths are hanging open. It was hysterical."

The reason that I brought this story to your attention... is because *Jesus promises to walk with us every step of our journey. He is caring about our problems and He promises to protect and guide us.*

Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

However... last week... we were in a passage of Scripture that told how Jesus had **deflated** His disciples... with a dose of reality (concerning what was about to happen.) ... Jesus... (right after their confession of belief that Jesus is the Messiah)... had told them the difficult news of God's shocking agenda for His Messiah...

Luke 9:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ *And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one...*

(That Jesus is the Messiah)

²² *saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."* ²³ *And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

They expected the Messiah to gather a great following... overtake corrupt Jerusalem... overthrow cruel Rome... and return Israel to its glory days. But Jesus predicted a completely different path to glory. ... This path would lead **downward**... through suffering and into death.

The discouragement they must have felt would take far more than a famous Uncle Jay... and his Lamborghini. ... And the public treatment they were told to expect... would be far **worse** than any bullying that has ever happened on an American schoolyard. ... *"Was it worth it... to give up everything and follow Jesus...?"*

At the end of last week's passage... we saw that to encourage the deflated Twelve... Jesus promised that some of them would "see the kingdom of God" before dying. ... And today we see Him give three of His students a foretaste of the kingdom... a close encounter with the supernatural... a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the heavenly agenda they had joined. ... They understood they had become an important part of something great... but they had **no concept** of its magnitude.

Today we will examine one of the most wonderful... powerful... and dramatic events in the New Testament. ... The proceedings that took place on what we call "**the Mount of Transfiguration**" reveal to us (not only the

glory of the Lord Jesus Christ)... but what **we** will become too... one day.
... Jesus brought three of His closest disciples with Him to encourage them
for what was (also) ahead for their lives... AFTER their suffering. ... These
men **needed** a glimpse into the glory that we will experience in the future...
to answer (what was undoubtedly on their minds) – “*Is this all worth it?*”

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in glory in Christ Jesus.*

He gave His disciples an event that had a huge impact on Peter... James...
and John. ... Several years later... Peter wrote about this... in his second
letter... as verification that their claims about Christ were true...

2 Peter 1:18 (ESV)

*¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were
with him on the holy mountain.*

As we read (now) about this event... may you and I be encouraged...
(knowing what is in store for us)... and knowing that it will (indeed) all be
worth it.

Luke 9:28-36

By seeing Moses and Elijah... the disciples saw two Old Testament
believers who were *still living*... and they were living in a glorious state.
This was the disciples destiny – too!

This event would confirm that Christ’s announced plan of suffering was to
conclude with glory and power over death. ... The events on this mountain

would strengthen their faith... courage... conviction... and boldness in the difficult days that were ahead of them.

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Verse 28... please notice that our Lord was once again praying... which suggests that prayer is one of the keys to a transformed life. ... When Jesus prayed - something happened to Him.

Luke 9:28-29

The Lord took Peter... James... and John up into a mountain to pray. While He prayed... the Lord's countenance was "transfigured." ... This word is from the Greek *metamorphoom* — *metamorphosis* (like what a catapillar does) in English. The word means "*a change in appearance that comes from within*." (It is as if Jesus wore a "body suit" and merely unzipped it a little... and His BRIGHT essence came pouring out...) ... This verse does not mean that a light... as a spotlight... shone on Him... but that a light came from within His body and shone outwardly.

Matthew records that "*His face shone like the sun*" (Matt. 17:2). ... Luke (here) says that His clothing also changed... as it literally "*flashed like lightning*." ... We cannot possibly hope to comprehend the scene from this description. ... In the apostle's attempts to discuss this event... it must have completely frustrated them. ... How can they have a vocabulary for what they experienced and could not understand?

Jesus prayed and His countenance was changed. ... Is there not something for us to consider about **prayer** (here)? ... Our passage describes a heavenly glory... one that we will all experience when Christ takes us to be with Him... but isn't prayer powerful enough to change our countenance while we remain here on earth... as well...? ... Yes!

The power of prayer can replace perplexity with peace... fear with faith... consternation with confidence and courage... discouragement with dedication and determination... and hopelessness with hope.

There is a bumper sticker that says: "Prayer changes things." (And) It does! Prayer changes **you**. ... This is why we are to pray for our enemies because this not only helps to change our enemies... it changes **us**. We can have a limited "transfiguration" experience every day... as we fellowship with the Lord... in prayer. Rather than being conformed to this world... we must be conformed into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Jesus continually spoke with two very special men. The first was Moses (who had been dead for over 1400 years.) ... The other man was Elijah (who had been snatched from the earth 900 years earlier.) ... The Bible says they appeared in glory and majesty. ... In this context... we understand this to mean that it was a visible expression of God's presence.

That the men's appearance looked similar to that of Jesus... doesn't give them equal status with God... but it does imply they are more like Him now than when they walked the earth. ... They spoke with the Lord about His

departure from this earth. ... Jesus had a chat with the past... about the immediate future... about six months away.

But why Moses and Elijah? ... Why not Abraham and Isaiah? ... Why not Jeremiah and Daniel? ... Or Jacob... Joseph... David... or one of the patriarchs along with another prophet? ... Why not John the Baptizer? ... Why these two men in particular?

Potential explanations will require a little conjecture... because we are not given the answer (here) in Scripture. ... But... lets observe that Moses was considered the father of the Law... and Elijah was the archetypical prophet. Together... the two men embodied the spirit of “the Law and the Prophets” in Old Testament Scripture. ... (Plus) Moses represented the beginning of Israel as a nation... leading them out of Egypt and to the Promised Land... while Elijah represented their consummation by returning before “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” ... Moses represents the exodus from Egypt and the Law... and Elijah represents end-time events (the exodus of God’s people into God’s presence forever.)

Luke (even) tells us what they talked about. They spoke of a different exodus. That is what they word “departure” in verse 31 means. These men were discussing with Jesus the suffering and death which were coming to the Lord in the city of Jerusalem. Christ knew where He was going to die, how He was going to die, and when He was going to die. Such knowledge would only increase the pressure and stress He was already facing.

Apparently... Jesus needed a very special kind of encouragement... an encouragement from two Old Testament believers — believers who had

lived in the faith and expectation of His coming to save them. There stood Moses sharing how God had so miraculously saved and delivered the children of Israel out of bondage, and how the exodus from Egypt was only a picture of the marvelous deliverance the Son of God was to accomplish for man.

Jesus was to accomplish a new exodus... a new saving deliverance... except this time it was to be for the entire world. ... All men who put their faith in Christ will be delivered from the bondage of sin... death... and Hell to eternal life in Heaven. Sharing their love for Him and their trust and hope in His death for them... they would stir Jesus to continue on for the sake of mankind.

Being reminded of the marvelous deliverance (exodus) that had happened so long ago was bound to strengthen and lift the heart of Christ. Just seeing Moses and Elijah stand there... two who had trusted... believed... and hoped... was bound to cause the Lord's spirit to rise. ...

It is not hard to imagine that these stalwart heroes of Old Testament faithfulness came to encourage Jesus... to affirm His agenda. ... After this conversation... Jesus made Jerusalem His focus... which Luke notes several times from this point on (Luke 9:51, 53; 13:33; 17:11; 18:31).

And what a tremendous encouragement this can be for you and I. Jesus' death was no accident; it was an accomplishment. ... He was in charge throughout the whole appalling affair. ... The Romans were not in charge. The rabbis were not in charge. The rabble was not in charge. ... Jesus was in charge. ... He sovereignly dismissed His spirit and died of His own volition.

It is comforting to know that (in the final analysis) our salvation does not rest upon our own changeable and subjective spiritual condition... but upon God's eternal plan. ... Here was Jesus... Moses... and Elijah... discussing THE plan.

Luke 9:32-33

The odd thing is that Peter... James... and John seem to have slept through most of it. ... They awakened just in time to see the glory of the Lord and His two friends from long... long ago. ... Then Peter blurted out the first nonsensical thing that came into his head: *"It is good for us to be here"*... he said... *"here on holy ground, alone with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah."* ... Still talking nonsense... he continued: *"Let us make three tents; one for You... and one for Moses... and one for Elijah."*

God broke in and Peter finally stopped talking. Peter was trying to prolong the moment. He was trying to keep the "mountain-top experience" from fading away... much like I do after I attend a great Christian conference... with great speakers... excellent fellowship with other believers... and great singing. Peter expressed an honest desire that we all share. We want the kingdom in its fullness to come NOW... and to remain forever! (The kingdom will indeed come and remain... but only at the cost of great suffering... and only when the time is right. ... Jesus would have to journey to Jerusalem and suffer for the sake of His kingdom.) And we (now) must wait for His return.

But why did Peter want to build these three shelters? ... Where did this come from? ... New Testament scholars have determined that the Jewish month in which the transfiguration took place was the Jewish month

of Tishri (which is our October)... the sixth month before Passover and therefore six months before Jesus' crucifixion.

During this month (Tishri) the Jews celebrated the feast of Tabernacles... or Booths... and it is possible that at this very time the feast was being observed in Jerusalem. ... During a period of seven days the people lived outdoors... in small shelters... or booths... made of leafy branches... symbolizing the temporary dwellings of their forefathers in the wilderness... when Moses led them out of Egypt. This event was a memorial to God's preservation of His chosen and redeemed people. ... So this feast (being close at hand)... probably caused Peter to blurt out that they should build three tents.

Luke added an editorial comment that Peter did not realize what he was saying. ... Peter's remarks came just as they were leaving. It seems as if he was trying to prevent that. *"Don't rush off! Stay for more of this glory and kingdom here on earth! ... Kingdom glory NOW – let's forego that suffering stuff...!"* ... But that was not the plan that Christ had told him would happen. The kingdom would come and stay – ONLY when the time was right.

(And) Peter was wrong for another reason. Peter's proposal greatly dishonored Christ in that it put Christ on the same level as Moses and Elijah. ... As great as these men were... they did not compare to Christ. (You see... Peter wanted to make three tents exactly alike. But these men were not Christ's equals.) A voice from a cloud is about to tell Peter this...

(Lastly)... Peter's proposal was foolish in that it would keep Moses and Elijah from their better abode in heaven... So the proposal was totally

worthless. ... But isn't very much like the urgent (but very foolish) requests that you and I often-times propose to the Lord...? ... "*God... why don't You give me THIS...*" or "*I really need to have THAT right now...*" ... But NOTICE that Jesus doesn't answer Peter. God's voice from the cloud (however) will re-direct him. As Peter's voice trailed off, a cloud descended and enveloped the scene.

Luke 9:34-35

What is this cloud? ... In Scripture... the presence of God is often indicated by the mention of a cloud. ... This cloud was "a bright cloud." This was the Shekinah glory... the cloud that symbolized God's presence. It had been 600 years since anyone in Israel had seen the *Shekinah* glory.

* This was the cloud that passed by Moses as God covered him in the cleft of the rock with his hand, so that Moses only saw the afterglow.

* It was the cloud that guided Israel out of Egypt.

* It was the cloud that rested upon the tabernacle and above the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place.

Eight days earlier... after hearing about the Lord's plan to enter Jerusalem and then suffer on behalf of His people (instead of conquering the city)... the disciples probably started getting cold feet. ... They needed the reassurance that could only come from the voice of God.

Notice that the Father didn't speak to Jesus. He addressed the **disciples**. God staged the whole event for this purpose. ... This close encounter with the supernatural provided the men all the reassurance they lacked before. Thanks to the Father's endorsement... any doubts they might have harbored - dissipated like a morning fog.

Just like Jesus' baptism (which we saw in Luke chapter 3)... here is a voice speaking to those who were witnessing the event: **This is My Son, whom I have CHOSEN; listen to Him.**

Luke used a grammatical construction (here) called the "restrictive attributive" (a-ttrib-u-tive.) It places *extra emphasis* on the adjective "Chosen." ... It's as if God had said: "*Make no mistake, Jesus is the Chosen One!*" ... (Now)... all of this - the Father's endorsement here - recalls something that God had Moses write (back in in Deuteronomy.)

Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

Jesus is this chosen One Who is greater than Moses! ... Listen to Him. He is starting something new... and better than what Moses started.

... [P A U S E] ...

There could never have been a better preparation for Jesus disciples. He was getting ready to leave them... and there was so much that they needed to know... with strong conviction.

Jesus promises to walk with us every step of our journey. He is caring about our problems and He promises to protect and guide us.

Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Luke 9:36

The Shekinah glory disappeared... the cloud went away... the voice finished speaking... Moses and Elijah left... and Jesus looked once again like a traveling rabbi. ... The conversation with Heaven was over and Jesus was alone with His disciples.

On the mountain now there was stone silence. No one said anything... not even Jesus. We can picture the silence throughout the night as they were apparently on the mountain all night. Peter... James... and John had kept quiet about this entire experience... not telling anyone *at that time what they had seen*. ... Matthew and Mark wrote that Jesus ordered the disciples not to tell anyone about this until he had risen from the dead. ... Then they could talk about it... presumably because then they would better understand it.

The Christ that most Jews of that day were expecting was not the Christ who had actually come. Instead of coming to conquer the Romans, the Messiah had come to die and conquer death. Instead of coming in divine glory, Jesus came in humble meekness. Instead of coming to deliver the Jews from political bondage, the Lord came to deliver from sin's bondage all men who would trust in Him.

Bottom line... what was the purpose of the Transfiguration? I think the Father had two objectives in mind—one for Christ and another for the disciples. ... First... the Father brought reassurance to the Son... that the way of suffering was the best and only plan of salvation. (You see)... In the weakness of His humanity... Jesus depended upon His Father for support and encouragement... which even HE needed at times.

I think the Father also wanted to remind the disciples that Jesus was indeed the Christ... His “Chosen One.” The disillusionment they had suffered almost certainly undermined their belief.

Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

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Does this mean that you and I should pray for such miraculous events – in order for us to carry on... when we suffer a hit to our believing...? No!

As wonderful as these experiences are... they are not the basis for a consistent Christian life. **That** can come only through the Word of God. Experiences come and go... but the Word remains. Our recollection of past experiences will fade... but God’s Word never changes. The farther we get from these events... the less impact they make on our lives. ...That was why the Father said in our passage today: “*Hear Him!*”... and why Peter made this same emphasis on SCRIPTURE in his letter to the churches:

2 Peter 1:16-21 (ESV)

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

God has given you and I something even better... than this experience that the disciples had.

So... I close now... with the remarks of Chuck Swindoll... as he concluded his commentary on Luke's presentation of the Transfiguration (which we have been studying today.)

We can have confidence—despite the many challenges to our faith—that pursuing God's plan is always best, even if it leads through suffering, pain, and perhaps even death. While we endure the dominion of evil now, a glorious future awaits the faithful. Some pay a huge price for their decision to follow Christ. Some lose contact with their families, some endure social and cultural rejection, some even risk losing their lives for the sake of trusting in Christ. Others may not face such extreme difficulties, but the decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ opens the believer to spiritual attacks.

Apart from those difficulties, life can be just plain hard. In fact, sometimes the decision to forsake Christ can appear easier. The Transfiguration is our reminder today: Stay with God's plan! There is none better. Even if it means suffering and pain, even to death. Stay the course. The glory of God awaits you at the end of your journey.