

## **“A Lesson in Faith”**

March 1, 2020

Luke 9:37-45

### **I. Introduction**

Have you ever noticed that after you have had a really great day or just the right answer or have been successful doing a particular difficult or challenging thing that there soon follows an experience in which you fall flat on your face—you “whiff” on something simple or obvious? You might say that you have gone from a mountaintop experience to what may be called the valley of despair. That’s what Jesus’ disciples experienced in today’s Scripture.

Jesus and the 12 Apostles had journeyed to northern Israel---to Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Herman. It was here, after following Jesus for close to 2 ½ years, that the disciples finally reached the conclusion that Jesus was without a doubt the Messiah, the Son of God ([Luke 9:20](#)). This must have been a mountaintop experience for all of them. A week after the disciples’ grand conclusion, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain—probably Mount Hermon itself—where Jesus was encouraged by Moses and Elijah and the 3 Apostles saw the glory of the Son of God and heard the testimony of God the Father from the clouds. This would have been another mountaintop experience. But this is real life, so after a mountaintop experience comes the valley of testing.

Up to this time, the disciples had walked really by sight. They had watched Jesus perform miracles, they had heard His teachings and watched Him interact with people, but soon that would change. Soon Jesus would not be physically present, so they needed to learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Today we see their lesson in walking by faith—actually an example of *not* walking by faith.

### **II. Healing a Boy with an Evil Spirit**

#### **A. The Situation**

**1. The Disciples** First, we see the situation. It all began “**the next day**”—the day after Jesus’ amazing transfiguration. Jesus and Peter and James and John came back down the mountain and found

the remaining 9 Apostles surrounded by a large crowd. They had been left on their own and things hadn't gone well. Mark adds some more details—turn to Mark 9:14-29. The nine had been unable to deliver a boy from demonic control. There were also teachers of the law who were debating with them and perhaps even taunting them because of their failure. When He arrived, Jesus found nine hopeless and helpless disciples who probably felt quite flustered and intimidated in the midst of this chaotic scene.

**2. The father and his son** Working his way through the crowd with his son, a father shouted to Jesus to make himself heard above the noise of the mob. He cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him.” Matthew 17:14-15 adds that the man “knelt before him” and addressed Jesus as “Lord.” That the boy’s father addressed Jesus as Lord and teacher implies that he had faith not only in Jesus to heal his son, but he also believed that Jesus’ teaching was the truth of God. He begged Jesus to look, i.e., to look with compassion, at his son. The father then described the son’s symptoms: “He suddenly screams;” is thrown “into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.” Matthew and Mark both added that the demon repeatedly attempted to destroy the boy by throwing him into open fires and pools or wells of water. Since Jesus wasn’t there, the man had come to the disciples instead. It was the inability of the disciples to remove this demon that led to the helpless and hopeless father and a demon-possessed boy.

## **B. Jesus’ Response**

**1. To the disciples** Then there is Jesus’ response—1<sup>st</sup> to the disciples. Earlier in Luke 9:1-2 Jesus had given His disciples authority and power over demons when He sent them out two by two. They had cast out demons then—but now something was wrong. Even though the crowd was made up largely of those who did not believe in Jesus and the faith of the boy’s father was weak, Jesus’ rebuked the disciples. “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” was directed primarily at the disciples—they knew better. Where was their faith? Jesus was pointing out that the cause of their inability to cast out the demon was their failure to believe, their lack of faith. Jesus showed His exasperation, His disappointment and pain

with their constant failure to believe and trust in Him when He said, “How long shall I stay with you and put up with you?” After all the time they had spent with Him, such a lack of faith was inexcusable. Besides that, there wasn’t much more time left before He would leave them. Would they ever learn?

**2. To the demon** Jesus then turned to rebuke the demon. In order to complete what the disciples had failed to do, Jesus said, “Bring your son to me.” The man was going to get what he so desperately wanted. The demon, on the other hand, was going to get what he definitely didn’t want—he was going to come face-to-face with his sovereign, the Son of God. In desperation, “even while the boy was coming, the demon” made one last attempt to kill him. As the father and son approached Jesus, the demon slammed “him to the ground in a convulsion.”

At this point Mark adds in [Mark 9:22-24](#) that the father looking on in helpless torment, cried out to Jesus, “If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” Jesus replied, “If you can? Everything is possible for one who believes.” Jesus didn’t usually call for faith in those He healed. In this case, however, He intended to use this man as an illustration for the Apostles of what even imperfect faith in Him can accomplish. In a heart-felt honesty, “the boy’s father exclaimed, ‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’” The lesson that faith is essential to access the power of God applied to the crowd gathered around Him, to the father who was struggling to believe and to the disciples whose faith was also weak, even wavering. The disciples, especially, needed to learn this lesson since after Jesus’ death and ascension to heaven, they would only be able to experience divine power through faith in their Lord and Savior. Without any fanfare, “Jesus rebuked the evil spirit.”

**C. The Results** Then we see the results. The results were two-fold. First, Jesus “healed the boy and gave him back to his father.” Second, the crowd was amazed at Jesus’ power. “They were all amazed at the greatness of God. Everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did.” They not only marveled at the deliverance of the boy from a powerful demon, but also “at all that Jesus did.” His power over disease, death, demons, and nature continued to amaze and baffle the people.

**D. A word of warning** Jesus then warned His disciples. Jesus' demonstration of power and authority over a very powerful demon once again raised the disciples' expectations that Jesus was the Messiah they expected. To be fair, it's hard to let go of something one has been taught throughout his or her life. So, wanting to make sure that the disciples didn't continue to rest in any false expectations, Jesus "said to His disciples, 'Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you.'" What He was about to say was important, it was something they must listen to; something they needed to really understand: "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men."

Jesus' prediction of His death was too much for the disciples to understand. They didn't understand because it didn't fit what they had been taught throughout their lives. Luke added that the precise details of that disturbing and upsetting truth "was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it." Jesus, the tender compassionate Savior and Lord, knew what they could handle, and withheld information that He knew would devastate them. Nor did the apostles push the issue, because "they were afraid to ask him about it."

### III. Conclusion

The healing of the demon-possessed boy was a lesson of the importance of faith to the Apostles and to us today—Jesus called them an "unbelieving generation." Actually, the foundation of Christianity and an eternity in heaven is based on faith—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to Ephesians 2:8-9. We are not saved from hell by doing good works or even having the best of intentions, we are saved to an eternity in heaven by believing in—having faith in—Jesus Christ. John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." Galatians 2:16 puts it this way, "Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."

The Apostles had a saving faith in Jesus, but it must not stop there. The Christian life is a life of faith. In [2 Corinthians 5:7](#) Paul wrote that Christians “live by faith, not by sight.” In [Galatians 2:20](#) he wrote, “The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” [Hebrews 11:6](#) says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Everyone has faith; everyone trusts in things. You have faith that the pew will hold you up. You have faith that the water you drink is safe. You have faith that the food you eat will not harm you. You have faith that you can drive safely from home to church and back again. This “*human*” faith is based on human experience. Biblical faith is not natural, human faith. [Hebrews 11](#) is often called the faith chapter—the word “*faith*” appears over 24 times. [Verse 1](#) defines faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” From the examples in [Hebrews 11](#) of godly men and women of the Old Testament, we see that Biblical faith is believing in who God is and what He has said. Biblical faith is based on the absolute confidence in the truth of God’s promises in Scripture.

What about your faith? [Acts 4:12](#) says, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” [Romans 3:23](#) says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” [Romans 10:13](#) says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved?” Have you ever done that? Have you ever prayed to God and admitted that you are a sinner and asked Him to be the Savior and Lord of your life? If you haven’t, why not do it this morning? You don’t know when you will leave this life and stand before God. [Hebrews 9:27](#) says, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

If you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior, does your life show it? [James 2:18](#) says, “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” The nine Apostles would have told you that they had faith in Jesus, but what did their actions say? [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, i.e.,

have faith in Him, and He will make your paths straight.” Do you really have faith in Him? As Hebrews 11 shows, genuine faith results in a life of obedience to God, doing what He commands. Does your life show an obedience to God or obedience to someone or something else?