

FBC POWELL, 2-11-18 PM NOTES
"The Battle at the Bottom of the Mountain"
Luke 9:37-45
37 in Series "The Gospel According to Luke"

2 Peter 1:16-18 (NASB) ¹⁶ "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales 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, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'—¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

I. The Problem (vv. 37-41a)

Mark 9:14 (NASB) "When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them."

Luke 9:1 (NIV) "When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases."

A. The Problem of a Possessing Demon (vv. 37-39)

Mark 9:25 (NASB) "When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.'"

Mark 9:18 (NASB) "And whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*."

B. The Problem of Powerless Disciples (v. 40)

Mark 6:13a (NASB) "And they were casting out many demons..."

Matthew 17:20b (NASB) "...Because of the littleness of your faith..."

Matthew 17:20b (NASB) "...for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

Luke 11:8 (NASB) "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of **his persistence** he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

II. The Power (vv. 41-45)

Luke 9:1 (NIV) “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.”

A. The Power Seen (vv. 41-43a)

Romans 8:28-29 (NASB) ²⁸ “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB) “In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19 (NASB) “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 6:10-13 (NASB) ¹⁰ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

B. The Power Suspended (vv. 43b-45)

Sermon 37: The Battle at the Bottom of the Mountain

Luke 9:37-45

In our last study, we saw Jesus as the glory that was veiled at His incarnation shone through in bright light unlike any other light. Luke 9:29: “And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became* white *and* gleaming.” This is one of the greatest revelations of God the Son’s majestic glory ever shown to man. Peter, James, and John then marveled as Moses, Israel’s greatest lawgiver, and Elijah, the foremost prophet both appeared and talked with Jesus about His death that was coming. Peter never got over this amazing transfiguration. He was referring to it many years later when he said in 2 Peter 1:16-18:

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

From that glorious scene, Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John came down from the mountain to deal with this fallen world and its problems. What a contrast – there is the mountain of the transfiguration with all its glory and in the valley a demon possessed boy, a distraught father, and the unbelieving disciples who had not been on the mountain. On the mountain, Jesus Christ displayed His true glory while in the valley Satan displayed his evil hatred of those Jesus loved. When Jesus, Peter, James, and John came down from the amazing demonstration of glory, they encounter the most severe manifestation of demon possession given in all the Gospels. To a lesser degree, we all experience this unpleasant contrast. For example, I love Sundays! I love almost everything about Sundays. I get to be with my church family that I dearly love; I get to share the greatest news ever heard by mankind – the Gospel; I typically get to have lunch with three of our five children and their families; I get to take a nap and then come back to church and once again share even deeper truths concerning the greatest news ever heard. Then Monday comes! What a contrast! We live in a fallen world. Thank God for the mountains, but our work, our mission, our assignment on a fallen planet primarily takes place in the valley with all its trials, disappointments, pain, and sin. We have a very real adversary and we are in a real war that has real battles and real casualties. As soldiers in this real war we need to accept the reality of that contrast and realize that this is why the master has left us here; there is work to do and there are battles to fight.

I. The Problem (vv. 37-40)

There is a type or picture here in this passage that is so obvious that I can't pass it by. Christ was absent, having gone up the mountain to have His glory revealed. Down below, His disciples seemed powerless in the face of a crisis and seemed to just be resigned to their powerlessness. They evidently had not seriously considered persisting prayer and had just given up on doing anything to help this tormented boy who was in the grip of Satan. Oh, how this describes so many churches today. The church has been given promises and power, but the church is by and large prayerless and impotent to do anything to help those in the grip of Satan's power. From Mark's account, we see more of what was happening. Mark 9:14: "When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them." Think about this scene. Here was a demon possessed boy, a distraught father, the other nine of the twelve disciples who were arguing and powerless, and the crowds just milling around and watching – unimpressed. You don't have to have a great imagination to see here a picture of so many churches today. The world is unimpressed with us because they have seen so little power manifested in transformed lives. They all too often just see a bunch of powerless people in bondage to sin just like they are. All too often there is almost no visible difference between the church and those who are in the world.

To understand the problem they were facing, we need to go back to Luke 9:1 (NIV): "When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases." This is the key to understanding this text. The battle at the bottom of the mountain was a battle concerning belief – belief that what the Lord had promised these twelve disciples in Luke 9:1 was possible.

A. The Problem of a Possessing Demon (vv. 37-39)

In Mark's account, we see that the boy was also unable to speak and probably was deaf. Mark 9:25: "When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.'" Mark also gives us a more detailed description of the boy's symptoms. Mark 9:18: "and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his

teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*.” Only Jesus and perhaps to a lesser extent those of us who have raised a child with a handicap could understand the agony of this father. This boy was likely covered with scars from falling into open fires and he would have to be watched constantly lest he fall into water and drown.

Let’s make sure we get the real impact of what is happening here. The nine disciples had attempted to cast out the demon but failed. In Mark’s account we see that the disciples were in a heated argument with the Scribes who taught the law. Out of this chaotic scene comes a pitiful voice: “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only *boy*.” The Greek verb “look at” is translated “look with mercy” in other places. Doesn’t your heart break with this father? Satan, the enemy of our soul’s desires to hit us where it hurts the most. That is why he often strikes the young. Think about all the instances of that in the Gospels. There was the daughter of Jairus, the nobleman’s son in Capernaum, the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and the widow of Nain’s son. Satan hits us where it hurts the most.

B. The Problem of the Powerless Disciples (v. 40)

Why could these disciples do nothing to help this boy? They had cast out demons before. Mark 6:13a: “And they were casting out many demons...” The problem was their unbelief. Notice those words in Luke 9:40: “I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.”

In Matthew’s account, the disciples came to Jesus and asked why they had failed. Jesus answered them in Matthew 17:20b: “...Because of the littleness of your faith...” They had some faith. They had saving faith and enough faith to attempt to cast out the demon, but it was an insufficient faith. Let me get rid of some common misconceptions about faith. The terms “much” and “little” when they refer to faith are not speaking of the quantity of faith. How do you measure quantity when it comes to faith? You can’t. Would you say, “I have a gallon of faith, but you only have a pint.” That’s ridiculous. When it comes to amount, even the smallest faith in the right object is sufficient. Picture a man who needs to cross a frozen lake. He is scared stiff, but he steps out with faltering steps and deep fear as he goes across. It turns out that the ice is several feet thick and could hold up a car. He gets safely to the other side because of his small amount of faith in a worthy object. Another man several hundreds of miles to the south must cross a frozen lake. He has total confidence that the ice will support his weight. He sets out across the lake whistling a happy tune, but a few yards from the shore he left, the ice thins, and he falls through and drowns. He had what the world calls “great faith” but it was in an unworthy object. Was it just deceit and error?

Jesus is not talking about the amount of faith. What is the opposite of unbelief, or littleness of faith? Jesus tells us that it is faith like a mustard seed. Matthew 17:20b: “...for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” The point with referencing a mustard seed is that it is small and yet grows to be a large bush. The faith of a mustard seed is *persistent faith*. It continues to grow because it doesn’t give up!

That’s the problem the disciples had. They no doubt invoked Jesus’ name and said what they normally said and when nothing happened, they gave up. Listen carefully; true faith is rooted in the person and the promises of God revealed in the Word of God. Simply believing something will happen because you want it to happen and visualize it happening is not biblical faith. Little faith is rooted in the person and promises of God found in the Word of God, but it is not persistent. It gives up when something doesn’t happen immediately.

Great faith, effective faith, powerful faith, is rooted in the person and promises of God revealed in the word of God, but *it persists* and never gives up. A mustard seed just keeps growing. It persists and refuses to stop until it reaches full size. That is the kind of faith God honors. Jesus

illustrates this mustard seed faith in Luke 11 with a story about a man who had an unannounced guest and went to a friend's house to ask for bread and persistently refused to go away until he got what he asked for. Luke 11:8: "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

Mountains in the Bible symbolize obstacles. In Matthew 17:20 that I quoted earlier, Jesus said "...if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." He is saying that no obstacle that stands in the way of God fulfilling His promise will be able to permanently stand in the way. Persistent faith like a mustard seed continues to pray and the mountain (obstacle) will eventually fall. Nothing that God has promised will be impossible when we are persistent in faith.

Perhaps the greatest example of mustard seed faith since the days of the apostles is George Mueller who ministered in the mid to late 1800's. We hear stories about Mueller praying and quickly the prayer was answered, but there were also prayers that the answer came only after years, even many decades later. Mueller had faith like a mustard seed. Early in his ministry he began to pray for five personal friends. It was not until five years later that the first one of them came to Christ. After five more years, two more of them came to Christ. After twenty years the fourth man was saved. Mueller prayed for the fifth man until he died and a few months after his death, his fifth friend came to Christ. Mueller had prayed for him for fifty-five years! We see the problem – a possessing demon and powerless disciples.

II. The Power (vv. 41-45)

In verse 41 Jesus is primarily speaking to His disciples (except the command at the end given to the father of the demon possessed boy). Why is He angry and even harsh to them? It was because of their unbelief. Remember His promise to His disciples in Luke 9:1? Luke 9:1 (NIV): "When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases." This was power, and authority given specifically to His twelve disciples for that time. I spent almost a whole sermon in Luke showing how and why Jesus gave authority and power to His disciples and before the New Testament Canon (inspired books of the New Testament) to authenticate the truth they were speaking. We have been given amazing authority and power as is laid out in His word, but not the same authority and power He gave His disciples before the New Testament. As we will see, we are better off with the power and authority of God's written Word than with the power of claiming miracles. I certainly believe that God can bring about a miracle whenever He chooses, but our authority now comes in the completed canon of the New Testament.

A. The Power Seen (vv. 41-43a)

Let's go back to the context of Luke 9. Jesus had given His disciples (apostles) power and authority over "all demons"! Not one demon was excluded from the authority and power Jesus gave them! Yes, Jesus was angry with these disciples. What was missing? It was persistence! At other times, they just commanded the demons to leave and they did, but this one did not, and they gave up. This was simply unbelief. Jesus said, "I've given you authority" and they tried once and gave up.

After His rebuke (a deserved rebuke) of His disciples, Jesus commands the boy's father to bring his demon possessed son to Him. This demon, knowing that he was face to face with God the Son, gave one last attempt to strike fear into this father and the disciples of Jesus (verse 42). But

Jesus without any fanfare or formula quoting simply in matter of fact language “...rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.”

Allow me to make this application to us, those who are Christ’s disciples and have His completed authoritative written word. We face the same temptation these disciples of Jesus faced at the foot of the mountain. How often do we look our troubles and trials in the eye and don’t believe what our Lord says in the inspired word about our trials? Do you believe that our Lord is sovereign over your trials, your troubles, and your disappointments? We look at those disciples and say, “Why did you give up; you had His promise that you had authority and power over all demons.” Yet look at all the glorious promises we have. Let me just look at one. Romans 8:28-29: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.” Are we claiming and standing on that truth – persistent when we can’t immediately see God at work?

Are you obeying 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” Are you bitter because of the way some things have turned out?

Can you truly say with Philippians 4:19: “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Do you stand on these promises a while and then give up like these disciples of Jesus did?

When the enemy comes against you, are you obeying Ephesians 6:10-13:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

This book is chocked full of commands and promises that cover every conceivable trial, challenge, heartbreak, attack and quandary you will ever face. Don’t flounder in unbelief and grieve the Lord when trials come or when the promises are not fulfilled in our timing.

Look at the first sentence in Luke 9:43a: “And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.” When people watch us go through trials and disappointments and see us draw upon the grace and power of the Lord and manifest joy in the storms of life, they will be amazed at the greatness of God.

B. The Power Suspended (vv. 43b-45)

Obviously, Jesus was referring to His coming death and resurrection. On the Cross the influence of God the Son was set aside as He allowed evil men to nail Him to a cross of wood. We now see the whole picture and know that on the third day He arose victorious over all his foes. It simply did not compute with His disciples. Had they understood, they would have shared His dread for the suffering of the wrath of God for us on that cross, but they would have rejoiced that the first prophesy given in Genesis 3:15 was about to be fulfilled. They would have rejoiced that the One that all the sacrifices pointed to was going to be offered as the final full sacrifice. They would have rejoiced that their sins were about to be paid for and that Jesus was going to be raised from the dead and death, and the devil would be defeated. They didn’t understand. After the cross, the Holy Spirit would bring these things back to them and they could then rejoice.

Conclusion

We are so blessed to live on this side of the cross and through the Scriptures to see things as they are and not as they appear. Oh the blessing of living on this side of the cross and the empty tomb. May we walk in the victory that has been procured for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.