

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

³⁷On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him^a. ³⁸And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy^b, ³⁹and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming *at the mouth*; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him *as it leaves*^c. ⁴⁰I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not^d.” ⁴¹And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here^e.” ⁴²While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him *to the ground* and threw him into a convulsion^f. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father^g. ⁴³And they were all amazed at the greatness of God^a.

^a 9:37 **On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him.** Matthew’s account skips over the crowd to the distressed father. Mark and Luke paint the bigger picture, Mark (9:14) saying that part of the crowd was a group of scribes arguing with the disciples. The transfiguration must have energized the three, but the energy of that vision was for purpose of equipping them to serve. Peter, James and John learned that you eventually have to come down from the mountain and love your neighbors.

^b 9:38 **a man from the crowd shouted, saying, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy.”** This man was just another face in the crowd, but his need and his loud plea to Jesus made him stand out. Matthew (17:14) tells us the man knelt before Jesus. All four gospel writers use this same “shout” word to describe the voice of John crying out in the wilderness.

Here again is a grieving parent fearful of losing an only child. We saw this with the woman whose only son died in chapter seven and the 12-year-old only daughter who died in chapter eight. The giving up of the only son theme is seen when you look back to Abraham and Isaac and when you look ahead to the only begotten Son of God.

^c 9:39 **a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming *at the mouth*; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him *as it leaves*.** Matthew and Mark both add that the demon had frequently thrown the child into fire or water to kill him. Matthew’s language (17:15) implies that the boy was subject to something similar to epileptic seizures because of the demon.

^d 9:40 **I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.** Remember that Jesus had already enabled the disciples to do this very thing.

^e 9:41 **Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”** To whom was Jesus speaking? The boy? The father? The nine apostles who did not go up the mountain? Jesus was impatient with unbelief—particularly the persistent unbelief of the religious leaders (see Mark’s mention of the dispute of the scribes, 9:14). It is understandably human to wonder how impossible circumstances could ever be resolved, but it is an assault on our Lord to question His ability to do what He has said He would do. Mark’s account includes that Jesus said: “All things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23). Then the father said “I do believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

^f 9:42 **While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him *to the ground* and threw him into a convulsion.** Mark (9:26) says the demon nearly killed the boy as it left, as witnesses saw it.

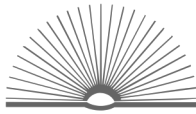
^g 9:42 **Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.** Notice that Jesus did not merely expel the demon. He also fixed the damage the demon

The Gospel of Luke
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But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, ⁴⁴“Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men^b.” ⁴⁵But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement^{c, d}.

had done. While He does not always choose to work this way, it's just like Him to often get people out of trouble and rescue them from consequences of the trouble as well.

^a 9:43 **they were all amazed at the greatness of God.** Peter uses this same “greatness” word to describe what he and the others saw on the mount of transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16).

^b 9:44 **“Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”** Jesus is saying in effect, “Look carefully at this, men. I am about to become the target of all of the unbelief, perversion and suffering that identify the people of this world.”

^c 9:45 **they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.** Jesus willed that the disciples not fully understand the cross until after the event. This was an entirely new paradigm and only time and witnessing actual events would bring the shift in thinking.

^d 9:37-45 Moses came down from Sinai to find the people in a frenzy despite God's clear revelation before Moses went up the mountain. Jesus came down from this mountain (having met with Moses) to find the scribes causing trouble and His disciples unable to do what He had already empowered them to do.

The experiences of Jesus and the disciples in this part of Luke's gospel is life in a miniature form. The disciples keep seeking relief and finding trouble. Jesus appeared to want them in trouble so He could demonstrate that relief from trouble comes only from listening to Him. Some of the things He said that they missed: Before the disciples met a storm Jesus had said, “Let us go to the other side.” To Jairus whose daughter lay dead or dying He said, “Do not fear. Only believe.” Now to His disciples a recurring theme is starting: “I am going to be killed.”

When you do not respond well to hard things in your life it is not because you are ignorant of what God has said. It is because you do not trust Him. Here are some reasons why God-ordained comfort violations (and there is no other kind) are good:

1. They are an opportunity to watch God resolve what you cannot control. With Jesus absent for a few days, trouble increased. Do you remember what He has said repeatedly about His sovereign purposes? Do you believe Him?
2. They are an opportunity to demonstrate that you trust God even though you do not understand what He is doing. If He really is the Lord, then He gets to call the shots and you are not in a place to question them. If He really is good, then the outcome will be morally superior to anything you could come up with. If He really deserves glory, then He is putting you in a position to show that to others.
3. They are another reminder that you live in a world in need of redemption. Jesus again alerted the men that He was headed for betrayal. It is always a good thing to have your attention sent back to the cross. This is more important than getting your way.

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