

Luke 9:37-45
July 14, 2019

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

If you were with us last week, you will recall that Peter, John, and James saw the transformation of Jesus before their very eyes. They saw the glory of God shining through Him so that His garments were blazing with light and His face was as bright as the noon-day sun. This was the glory of God. They heard the Father say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Moses and Elijah showed up and were having a conversation with Jesus about Jesus' departure, His death, resurrection, and ascension from Jerusalem. They literally experiencing the eternal kingdom. They literally were transferred from the world of faith to the world of sight. They were able to see what nobody else could see. They saw the glory of Christ, while the other nine apostles didn't. They saw the glorified Moses and the glorified Elijah. They heard the audible voice of God Himself. They had one brief moment of sight, very unusual for we walk by faith and not by sight. This was the glory that they had with Him in the mountain.

Transition: Now they have to come down the mountain, and no sooner are they off the mountain and they encounter a thronging mob of needy people, with a father and his convulsing son at the forefront. Mark 9:14 adds that the scribes were arguing with the disciples over the situation. They were probably using the disciples' failure to argue that Jesus Himself was lacking in power. While they dispute, this poor, helpless father and his desperately needy son plead for help. What a scene! Let's begin.

BOOK:

The Healing of a Boy with an Evil Spirit

³⁷ The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. ³⁸ A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹ A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. ⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

⁴¹ "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

⁴² Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil (unclean) spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." ⁴⁵ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. [X-REF Mark 9:14-29; Matt 17:14-22]

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus was grieved over the failures of His followers. He had given His Apostles authority over Satan, yet they were too weak to cast out a demon. They had the power and the authority (Luke 9:1) but they did not have the success. Why? First on the list was *faith*. They were part of an unbelieving generation and had lost the confidence that they needed in order to use their power. Are we?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 208). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Enduring (Luke 9:37–45)

“How long shall I stay with you and put up with you?” (Luke 9:41) You might expect that lament to come from an overworked kindergarten teacher, or an impatient army drill instructor, but it was made by the sinless Son of God! We are prone to forget how long-suffering our Lord had to be while He was ministering on earth, especially with His own disciples.

When you analyze this section of Luke's Gospel, you can better understand why Jesus spoke those words: *He was grieved over the failures of His followers*. He had given His Apostles authority over Satan, yet they were too weak to cast out a demon (Luke 9:37–45). In feeding the 5,000, Jesus gave them an example of compassion, yet they persisted in manifesting selfishness and lack of love (Luke 9:46–56). He taught clearly what it meant to follow Him, yet the volunteers turned out to be “me first” disciples (Luke 9:57–62). No wonder He was grieved!

Lack of power (vv. 37–45). We dare not stay on the glorious mountaintop when there are battles to fight in the valley below. Here was another “only child” needing the help of the Lord (Luke 7:12; 8:42), and even more so because His own disciples had failed. They had the power and the authority (Luke 9:1) but they did not have the success. Why?

When you study all three reports (Matt. 17; Mark 9), you discover what was lacking in their lives. First on the list was *faith* (Matt. 17:19–20); they were part of an unbelieving generation and had lost the confidence that they needed in order to use their power. But *prayer* and *fasting* were also lacking (Mark 9:29), which indicates that the nine men had allowed their devotional disciplines to erode during their Lord's brief absence. No matter what spiritual gifts we may have, their exercise is never automatic.

The devil tried one last throw (a wrestling term in the Greek), but Jesus rebuked the demon and cast him out. The Lord lovingly gave the boy back to his father (see Luke 7:15) and then took the Twelve aside for another lesson about the cross. After all, it was at the cross that Jesus would give Satan that final blow of defeat (John 12:31–32; Col. 2:15).

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 231)

6. JESUS'S HEALING OF THE EPILEPTIC BOY (9:37–43) (Matt. 17:14–18; Mark 9:14–27).

9:37–43. The transfiguration may have occurred at night, for Luke noted that **the next day** the four descended **from the mountain** and a **crowd met** Jesus. **A man** begged Jesus **to look** at his demon-possessed **son**, whom the other **disciples** had been unable to help. In stark contrast with the disciples, only Jesus could help the boy—just as He is the only One who can help the world. The disciples were powerless without Him. After the boy was healed, the crowd was **amazed** (*exoplēssonto*, “struck out of their senses”; cf. 2:48; 4:32) **at the greatness of God**.

7. JESUS'S TEACHING OF HIS DEATH (9:44–45).

9:44–45. In the midst of the amazement by the crowd, Jesus taught the disciples a second time that He would die by being **betrayed into the hands of men**. **But they did not understand as it**

was **hidden from them**. Apparently, the disciples were still confused as to how Jesus, with His glorious power, could experience a humiliating death. Nor could they put together the crowd's reaction to His miracles and His prediction that the nation would turn against Him and kill Him.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 288-292). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Context

At this point Luke omitted the passage about Elijah's return in Mark 9:11–13. This may have been because he already had alluded to how John the Baptist fulfilled Mal 3:1 (Luke 1:17, 76; 7:24–30 [esp. v. 27]). As a result Luke tied the present account more closely to the transfiguration so that the healing provides an illustration of Jesus' glory seen in 9:32 (cf. 9:43). The Lukan editorial work consists primarily of abbreviation. The Markan account, consisting of sixteen verses, is condensed to only seven in Luke. However, Luke also added a few comments, such as "the next day" (9:37), "only" (9:38), and "and they were all amazed at the greatness of God" (9:43).

Comments

9:37 The next day. While Mark 9:14 does give the impression that this incident took place on the same day as the transfiguration, only Luke made an explicit temporal link between the two accounts, resulting in an ever closer tie between them.

Down from the mountain. The mountain was mentioned in Luke 9:28. Just as Luke said that after the Sermon on the Plain Jesus descended to minister to the crowds (6:17), so after the transfiguration he reported that Jesus came down from the mountain to heal a boy.

9:38 Teacher. Mark also used "teacher," but Matt 17:15 has "Lord."

I beg you. Compare Luke 8:28.

Only child. See comments on 7:12. By mentioning that this was an "only child," Luke heightened the pathos of the situation.

9:39 A spirit seizes. Matthew 17:15 refers to the child as being "epileptic" (RSV, NEB) or having "seizures" (NIV). In Luke 13:11, 16 a demon is associated with a disease. The description of the child's situation appears to correspond to epilepsy.

It scarcely ever leaves him. The demon plagued the child continuously.

9:40 Your disciples. The historicity of the disciples receives support from the indirect nature of this statement. See comments on 6:13.

They could not. Whether this implies that the "power" given in 9:1 was limited to that mission only is uncertain, but in the present account this statement serves primarily to demonstrate that Jesus' power is still greater. Both Matthew (17:16, "could not heal him") and Luke (literally *were not able*) clarified Mark 9:18, "could not" (literally *were not strong enough*).

9:41 O unbelieving and perverse generation. Matthew and Luke both added "perverse" to this saying. For parallels to this saying, see Deut 32:5, 20; Matt 12:39; 16:4; Phil 2:15. This is the first explicit reference to the perverse character of Jesus' contemporaries, who represent humanity in general. Compare also Luke 11:30–32, 50–51; 17:25. In the present context this pejorative description seems to refer to the disciples who were not able to heal the child. Despite what they had seen and done, the disciples were still unbelieving (cf. 8:25). Yet it probably is best to see this description as applicable to everyone covered by the "all" of 9:43a, i.e., the disciples and the

crowd. All these are members of the present unbelieving and perverse generation. The use of the singular “generation” almost always has negative connotations in Luke-Acts.

Put up with you? Compare Isa 46:4 (LXX). This prepares for Luke 9:43b–45.

Bring your son. Although Jesus’ action and subsequent healing in his own time and situation were due to his compassion, Luke’s purpose in recounting the event was to demonstrate Jesus’ glory and might.

9:42 The demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. Compare 8:28 for a similar last-minute action by the demon.

Jesus rebuked the evil spirit. The demon was exorcised. Compare 4:39, where a fever was rebuked.

Healed the boy. This term “healed” (*iaomai*) is used of healing diseases. The term can also be used broadly to describe exorcising and healing (9:2) and to describe exorcising alone (Acts 10:38). The term “cure” (*therapeuō*) used in reference to diseases in Luke 9:1 can be used for “curing” evil spirits (6:18). Thus, although Luke did see a difference between exorcisms and healing (see comments on 4:39 and 7:21), they are not mutually exclusive.

Gave him back to his father. Compare 7:15.

9:43 They were all amazed. Fitzmyer notes this “typically Lukan reaction to the miracle.” Compare 4:32; 8:25; 11:14.

At the greatness of God. Some have suggested that this is a reference to Jesus’ greatness as “God” (cf. 8:39; Acts 20:28). Luke more likely saw in Jesus’ healing the greatness of God working through his Anointed, his Son. Compare Luke 5:26, which is similar to this verse but which clearly refers to God (cf. also 7:16). For Luke this Christological statement, which points to God’s greatness and majesty in Jesus’ activity, was so overriding that he omitted Mark’s reference to prayer (9:29), another strong Lukan emphasis.

The Lukan Message

Luke once again pointed out Jesus’ greatness and uniqueness. Faced with a plight the disciples could not remedy, Jesus healed with no difficulty even though the child had been continually plagued by the evil spirit. The demon had to obey him. Jesus’ authority is such that all were amazed at his manifestation of God’s greatness. There is also an allusion to humanity’s sinfulness and depravity in 9:41. In its unbelief and perversity this “generation” was not able to heal. It was powerless against the demonic. This generation’s unbelief and perversity (9:44) were such that the Son of Man would soon be delivered into their hands.

Context

Jesus’ second passion announcement recalls not only the first such announcement (9:21–22) but also the uniquely Lukan statement in the transfiguration account where Moses and Elijah spoke of Jesus’ “departure” (9:31). Luke’s editorial work is seen primarily in his reference to the people’s “marveling” at what Jesus did (9:43b), his omission of the resurrection prediction (9:44), and the addition of the fact that the meaning was hidden from the disciples so that they were not able to understand it (9:45b).

Comments

9:43b While everyone was marveling. Such wonder and amazement was not faith. Although this “unbelieving and perverse generation” (9:41) marveled at Jesus’ ministry, its perversity and lack of faith resulted in unbelief and incomprehension (9:45).

At all that Jesus did. This refers backward, not just to the preceding incident but to Jesus’ entire ministry up to this point.

9:44 Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you. This addition (literally *You [emphatic] set into your ears these words*) is not found in the parallels in Mark 9:31 and Matt 17:22. It highlights the following passion saying and makes this passion announcement more emphatic in Luke. The NIV correctly understands “these words” as referring forward to the passion announcement rather than as looking backward either to what Jesus already had said in his public ministry or to the crowd’s superficial response in Luke 9:43b. The imperative suggests that Jesus intended his disciples to understand the following passion announcement.

The Son of Man. The “for” (*gar*) that begins this statement is exegetical and best left untranslated. For Son of Man, see comments on 5:24.

Is going to be betrayed. The verb *paradidōmi* can mean “betray” (NIV, NRSV) or “deliver up/over” (RSV, KJV, cf. NEB). Since God is the subject (not Judas, for Judas is not mentioned), “deliver up/over” is the better choice. This translation also fits well Luke’s emphasis on the divine necessity of Jesus’ death. The verb should be understood as a “divine passive.” It is a circumlocution for “God is about to deliver.” God’s providence is clearly intended to be seen here as in 9:22, although no mention is made here of the resurrection. See comments on 9:22 and Introduction 8 (1). The passion was Luke’s primary focus at this point, and the disciples’ incomprehension in the next verse involved their failure to understand the divine necessity of Jesus’ death.

Into the hands of men. There is a play on words, “Son of *Man* ... hands of *men*,” in all three Synoptic accounts.

9:45 But they did not understand what this meant. The “this” (literally *this thing*) refers to the passion announcement in the preceding verse.

It was hidden from them. Compare 18:34, which is almost a duplicate of this verse. Is this to be understood as a divine passive (“God hid it from them”) or as a simple passive (“They did not understand it”)? The answer is determined primarily by how the following “so that” is interpreted. Jesus’ command in 9:44a suggests that he wanted his disciples to understand the passion announcement. Furthermore, a related word is used in 19:42, and 19:44d makes clear that the lack of knowledge or “hiddenness” is clearly culpable. In 18:34, a Lukan editorial comment, there is no suggestion that the “hiddenness” was God’s doing. The “it” is not defined with a doctrine of the atonement (see Introduction 8 [8]) but is simply a reference to Jesus’ forthcoming death and, according to 9:22, resurrection.

So that [*hina*]. Is what follows to be interpreted as the purpose or the result of “It was hidden from them”? If it is purpose, then it means that it was God’s will that the disciples not understand Jesus’ passion announcement at this time. In favor of this interpretation is the fact that *hina* indicates *purpose* more often than *result*. On the other hand, if “so that” should be read as indicating result, then the disciples did not grasp Jesus’ meaning simply because they were slow to catch on. The latter interpretation is favored by the fact that the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus what he meant. They could have asked but chose not to. This weakens the idea that God did not intend them to understand. Also the inability of this “unbelieving and perverse generation” to heal should perhaps logically be extended to an inability to understand. This also favors interpreting “so that” as signaling result rather than purpose. A final argument in favor of result is 9:22. Nothing

is said after this more complex passion announcement about the disciples' inability to understand. The reader assumes, since there is no reference to such a difficulty of understanding, that this was clear to the disciples. Luke, furthermore, eliminated the reference in the parallel account (Mark 8:33) that reveals Peter's lack of understanding. It is therefore best to interpret this verse as indicating that the disciples were not able to understand this passion prediction at that time due to unbelief and perversity.

And they were afraid to ask him about it. There is a similar statement in Mark (9:32). The disciples' fear may have been due to their having witnessed God's greatness (Luke 9:43; cf. 8:25).

The Lukan Message

More than either Matthew or Mark, Luke emphasized the disciples' inability to understand Jesus' teaching concerning his future passion. This is evident by his addition of 9:45b, c. He added the same material to 18:34. According to Luke, only after the resurrection were the disciples able to understand the divine necessity of their Lord's passion (cf. 24:6–7, 13–35, 44–47). There is much speculation about why Luke emphasized this ignorance. Since Luke tended to eliminate negative portrayals of the disciples (see comments on 9:32), we may assume that he was not seeking to demean them. For Luke they were revered "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (1:2). Luke's intention may have been to alleviate some confusion among his readers about the necessity of Jesus' death by pointing out that even the apostles could not understand at first. After the resurrection, however, the plan of God and the fulfillment of the Scriptures has been made plain. See Introduction 8 (1).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 9:37-45). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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