

Sunday, October 8, 2023 | Everyday Disciple

Week 24 | Luke 9:37-45 | “The Fallout of Faithlessness”

Last week, we heard God say of Jesus: “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” Rather than allow the disciples to put his own Son on the same level of importance as Moses and Elijah, God the Father made a profound declaration that Peter, James, and John would not soon forget. Though there have been many good and godly people throughout the years, there has *never* been a man like Jesus. The Lord is *unique*, and it is to him that all must listen and obey. Jesus is **the best** that God has to **offer** and the **best** we could hope to **find**.

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Today, we’ll be talking about *faithlessness*. When we hear about unbelief *outside* the church, it’s not surprising. But what about when we hear of it inside the church? It’s devastating. Christians are supposed to be *known* for their faith. But how many of us can name believers who have fallen away (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10)? It is tragic to see today and even more so in Jesus’ day.

The apostles were *supposed* to be the leaders. They had been given divine power and authority “over all demons and to cure diseases...to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal” (cf. Lu. 9:1). If anyone had great faith, it should’ve been *them*. But, as we’ll see, even their faith faltered. In fact, the rest of chapter nine explores six hindrances that either slowed the disciple’s progress (cf. Lu. 9:37-56) or, for some, stop it completely (cf. Lu. 9:57-62).

Salvation does not make us into superheroes. Faithlessness can cripple even the best Christian. And, sadly, when believers falter, the fallout is disastrous.

The disciples are the focus of today’s passage, and so I want you to notice **three** things about them:

**i. The disciple’s helplessness (vs. 37-40).**

**READ:** Luke 9:28-40 (ESV)

<sup>37</sup> On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. <sup>38</sup> And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. <sup>39</sup> And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. <sup>40</sup> And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”

The contrast between the Transfiguration could not be more striking. The Lord makes his way to the lowly plains from the lofty mountaintop. From the brilliance of God’s presence to the

presence of a grieving father. From heavenly perfection to earthly imperfection. Yet, whether atop a mountain or in the mud, Jesus shines bright.

This boy's condition is severe: he's seized by a spirit, cries out, convulses, foams at the mouth, shatters him, and the demon hardly leaves him. Quite a pitiful existence. The issue is further upsetting when we learn this is the father's only boy. Aside from the fact that there would be no one to carry on the family name, the father was grieved that his only child, the one on whom he placed his entire love and affection, was suffering.

But the father's desperate state was made even more desperate when the disciples—i.e., the very ones given power to cure diseases and cast out demons—could not help his boy. Imagine his relief when he heard all the reports about how people had been healed and demons excised by Jesus and his disciples. He must've run to them the first chance he got. But imagine his grief when he realized they could not help his little boy. They were no better than the physicians who could not the woman with the issue of blood.

**ii. The disciple's faithlessness (vs. 41-43a).**

**READ:** Luke 9:41-43a (ESV)

<sup>41</sup> Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." <sup>42</sup> While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. <sup>43</sup> And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

In verse 41, to whom did Jesus *direct* his comments? Like, who was he calling the "faithless and twisted generation"? Was it the crowds or the disciples?

It was both, and here are two reasons why I think that:

First, we ought to assume that while Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the mountain, the rest of the disciples must've been busy ministering to the crowds that consistently followed them wherever they went. Why else would there be a crowd already gathered when they returned? Many thousands had followed him into the desert (cf. Lu. 9:12). It is not a stretch to think they would follow him to the mountain's base. Thus, everyone—crowd and disciple alike—is in attendance to hear the father and Jesus.

Secondly, the last thing this father in need mentions is how the disciples were powerless to help. He thought these followers of Jesus could help, but they were as helpless as he was. This father was already desperate but made even more so when he was

disappointed by the lackluster performance of Jesus' disciples. Thus, right on the heels of this father's disappointment with the disciples and his desperate cry for help, Jesus says what he says.

So, it is reasonable to assume that when Jesus said, "O faithless and twisted generation," he spoke to the crowd and his disciples. The Lord lumped both together in his condemnation.<sup>1</sup> How sad that those who were supposed to have faith didn't. They were supposed to be better than the twisted generation around them, yet they were just like them here. Jesus does not look in the dark to find light; he looks to his followers to see if they shine? But, when he sees our light has dimmed, when our flame begins to burn low, it troubles him. Faithlessness is to be expected from unbelievers, not believers.

For those who've been hurt by the faithless believers: When people fail us, even if that person is your pastor, we ought to go to the source—i.e., God. The Lord ought to be our primary source of help.

iii. **The disciple's cluelessness (vs. 43b-45).**

**READ:** Luke 9:43b-45 (ESV)

But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples,<sup>44</sup> "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."<sup>45</sup> But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

Did the disciples understand Jesus? No. And though, admittedly, the phrase, "it was concealed from them," seems to imply that their cluelessness wasn't their fault, the entire context argues against this. It was their faithlessness that disappointed both the father and Jesus. And so, because of their unbelief, Jesus lumped them in with the rest of the unbelievers in his comments.

What's more, Jesus' words are emphatic. In Greek, the phrase is literally, "Let sink *you* into *your* ears these words...." He expected them to both hear and understand his words. At the very least, Peter, James, and John should've understood even better than their counterparts that Jesus was about to suffer because he had just explained this to them on the Mount of Transfiguration. But, really, no one should be confused. Immediately after they confessed him as the "Christ of God," Jesus explained that suffering awaited him in Jerusalem. At this point,

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<sup>1</sup> Bock p. 883; Garland p. 403; Green p. 286.

should we not at least consider the fact it wasn't only that a suffering Messiah was a complex concept to grasp, it was also that the disciple seemed not to want to accept it. And, in fact, what follows immediately after this seems to support this hypothesis.

Few things are harder to believe than truths that challenge our assumptions. When we are confronted with evidence that seems to contradict what we had always believed, we'd rather ignore it and refuse to engage with it--as was the case here with the disciples' fear--or completely turn our back on it and forget it--as was the case with Judas.

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

Faithlessness not only **impedes** our ability *to help* others, but it also **impairs** our ability *to grasp* God's word.

If you read the parallel accounts of this event, you'll see that the apostle's failure was as much a surprise to them as it was to the needy father. The disciples should've been able to heal that boy's son. After all, Jesus had explicitly given them the power over diseases and demons (cf. Lu. 9:1-2). Is it possible their power faded? No. There is nothing to even hit at that. Then where was the breakdown? *The disciples*.

Though we may be saved, when we lose our faith, we can't help others or hear God. The writer of Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

### **READ:** Hebrews 10:35-39 (ESV)

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of **endurance**, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has **no pleasure** in him." But we are **not** of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who **have faith** and **preserve** their souls.

What would've happened if Jesus didn't show up? How much better prepared would the disciples have been to cope with the crucifixion? If only they had faith in both circumstances.

## Video Description

### **Everyday Disciple | Week 24 | “The Fallout of Faithlessness” (Luke 9:3-45)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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