Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Significance of Faith, Part 1
Scripture: Luke 9:37-42
Code: 42-126

I suppose if there was one word that is sort of universally associated with religion and even with Christianity, it would be the word faith. We are people of faith, that's how we are identified. Even in the media we are called people of faith. And you often hear people say, "I am a person of faith, I have faith." As if somehow that was in itself noble. And it is true, Christians are people of faith, but I don't think perhaps everybody understands just exactly what that means. Let me help you clarify that.

When we say we are a people of faith, what do we mean? Do we mean that we find some virtue in just believing? Do we mean that somehow because we believe hard enough and strong enough we can make certain things happen? What does it mean to say I'm a person of faith? What does it mean I have faith in God?

Let me make it very simple without dealing with all of the possibilities and say this, faith, true faith, legitimate faith, what is biblically defined as faith is simply this, believing what God said simply because He said it. That's faith. Not because it's necessarily been proven to you. Not because you've necessarily experienced something. But simply because God said it you believe it and you believe to the point that you base your life on it. It is in that sense that we are people of faith. It is in that sense that we believe. It isn't that we just believe in believing. It isn't that we think we can somehow activate some reality by believing hard enough. It isn't that we believe we can make things happen by our faith. It is that we believe that what God said is what is true. That is what our faith is. It is faith in the revealed Word of God.

Somebody who has an illness says, "I have faith to believe I am going to be well." That is not an appropriate kind of faith because you do not know what God's will is and because you do not know what God's purpose is and because God has not revealed to you the future, you cannot believe in what God has said because He hasn't said anything about that. And what you can believe is that whatever happens God will do what is right and best and to His honor and to His glory.

Faith is not somehow a power, some kind of spiritual muscle by which you make things happen. Faith is putting your confidence in what God has revealed as being true simply because He said it. It is faith in things we cannot see.

Look for a moment at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews which, of course, is the monumental chapter regarding faith. And verse 1 says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for," that's being sure about something that hasn't happened. "It is the conviction of things not seen." It is to be sure about what hasn't happened, it is to be convinced about what you can't see. Now why would you be sure about something that hasn't happened and why would you be convinced about something you can't see? Only one reason and that is because God has said it is so. That's where our faith is placed and that's the way the saints of God have always lived.

Verse 3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Why do we believe that God made the universe? Why do we believe God made everything out of nothing? Why do we believe that the visible universe came from the invisible? Why do we believe that? Why do we believe that the worlds were prepared? Because the Word of God tells us so. We believe in creation, not evolution because we believe that the Bible is true. So we operate on faith in the Word of God and the Word of God has given us a creation account.

It was by faith, verse 4 says, that Abel offered to God a better sacrifice. What do you mean by that? I mean God told Abel and Cain what He required. Abel believed it and did it. He trusted that what God said was right, what God said was true. Verse 5 says, "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death." He was not found because God took him up. He had a private Rapture. "For he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God." How was he pleasing to God? Cause he did what God commanded him.

Jesus was pleasing to God. God the Father said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," because He always obeyed His Father. Enoch obeyed God, he did what God said. He obeyed His Word, he trusted His Word, he believed what He said. And he acted on it. That's what living by faith is. And without that, in verse 6, it's impossible to please God. You can't please God unless you respond to His Word believing it. God's Word came to Noah and said, "It's going to rain and flood the earth," and there never had been rain and there never had been a flood. But he spent 120 years building a boat because God told him it was going to happen and by faith he obeyed. "So by faith Noah being warned by God about things not yet seen," like rain and flood, "in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household." It was by faith that Abraham when he was pass the ability to have a child believed that God was going to give him a child. It was by faith that Sarah passed childbearing age believed that God was going to give her a son. Verse 20, "It was by faith that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau." It was by faith that Jacob as he was dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph. It was by faith that Joseph when he was dying made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel.

Why were they acting by faith? Because they were responding to what God had told them. It was by faith Moses when he was born was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw he was a beautiful child, they were not afraid of the king's edict. It was by faith that his parents knew the purpose of God in the life of the child. It was by faith Moses, verse 24, when he grew up refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he knew his calling and he knew it wasn't that. It was by faith, verse 30, that the walls of Jericho fell down. People did a silly thing, they walked around the walls, you remember, day after day after day after day which is not a way to conquer a city, it's a way to get killed because they're throwing things down from the wall on top of you. They did a foolish thing but they did it because God said to do it and they did it by faith. They couldn't see the result. They had to hope for the result. They were sure of it because God said it. They were convinced of it because He said it though they hadn't yet seen it, but it came to pass. It was by faith, verse 31, that Rahab the harlot didn't perish along with those that were disobedient. Why? Because she believed the Word of God through the spies and she acted on what God said. And it was faith, you remember, that marked the life of, verse 32, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets. It was by faith that they believed God and conquered kingdoms and performed acts of righteousness and obtained promises and shut the mouths of lions, such as Daniel did. It was because they believed in God that they quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, etc., etc., etc. It was by faith that they experienced, verse 36, mockings, scourgings, chains, imprisonment, were stoned, sawn in half, tempted, put to death with the sword, went about in sheepskins, goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill treated and so forth and so on. They all lived by faith.

What does that mean? It isn't some nebulous thing, they believed in believing or they activated reality by their faith. It isn't the idea that because they had this strong faith they made things happen. It is simply that God told them things and they believed Him. That's what faith is. We're talking about believing what the Lord has said is true simply because He said it. That's what faith is. We are a people of faith. First of all, because salvation is received by faith...salvation is received by faith. When you put your trust in Jesus Christ, that was an act of faith. It was not a wild leap of faith, as liberal theologians like to talk about it. There was no leap at all. It was a very calculated, very reasonable, very cognitive, very mental, very understandable, comprehensible step of faith because you believed that God had a Son, sent Him into the world and He died on a cross to pay for your sins and He rose from the dead affirming that His sin offering was satisfying the justice of God. He was exalted to the right hand of God and He is now interceding for His own and some day He's going to come and gather them and take them into heaven where He's preparing a place for them. You believed the facts of that, you put your trust in what you believed because God said it and you believed it, right? That's how you were saved. You weren't saved by some mystical experience. You were saved by believing the facts of the gospel and that salvation comes through grace by faith is substantially the foundation of Christianity, but it is faith in the facts of the gospel, faith in what God has revealed on the pages of Scripture. Salvation is received by faith, sanctification is received by

faith. Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I.," Paul says, "the life which I now live I live...he says...by the faith of the Son of God." Live by faith in the Son of God, he says.

In other words, now that I have come to salvation by faith, I go through sanctification by faith. What does that mean? That means that my progressive separation from sin, my progressive conformity to the likeness of Christ, my spiritual progress is directly related to my obedience to God's revealed Word. Sanctification is a process of obeying the Word of God, living a life that is defined for us as pleasing to God and laid out in specifics in the Scripture. Faith is at the heart of spiritual life, but it is not a nebulous faith, it is not some kind of self-controlled energy that makes things happen. Faith is simply trusting the what the Lord has said is true simply because He said it. It speaks of things I hope for that haven't yet been realized. It speaks of things that I cannot see but I believe them. I have basically banked my entire time and eternity on what the Bible says. That's why it's so important to protect the Word of God.

Faith then which is crucial to spiritual life is faith that is placed in the revelation of God. Those people in Hebrews 11 are the heroes of the faith because they believed God. And they believed God when it didn't appear on the surface to be reasonable to do that to those outside, but it's always reasonable to believe the revelation of God because our God is faithful, powerful and wise. That's why chapter 12 of Hebrews begins, "Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." It's a faith race. Our life is like a race, moving toward a goal. The character of this race is that we act in faith, we act in faith, we can't see the end of it, we can't even see the Lord. We can't see spiritual blessings. So we are assured of things that we hope for. We are convinced of things we can't see. We run the race. But it makes sense to run this race because we have so great a cloud of witnesses. We have all these people in the past who witnessed to the benefit and the blessing of running the faith race. They are giving testimony by the history of their lives to the validity of living a life of faith. Anything that encumbers you, anything that militates against that faith, get rid of it and sin which entangles us and diminishes our faith, get rid of it. Live a life of faith. It's just a matter of believing God. I believe that whatever God said is so...absolutely so. I unequivocally believe everything in the Bible is a true representation of what God wanted said. And my responsibility is to place my faith in His Word, His revelation.

This is critical. Without faith there can't be salvation. Without faith there can't be sanctification. It's absolutely critical. And as critical as it is for us and has been throughout all the era of redemptive history, it was equally critical for the beloved Apostles of Jesus. So let's go back to Luke chapter 9 and today and next Sunday we're going to learn the great monumental lesson about faith that Jesus gave to His Apostles, His disciples. Because of the crucial character of faith that we believe what we

can't see, we hope and are assured that things are true that we cannot touch, we live by faith. There's no other way to be saved than by faith. There's no other way to be sanctified than by faith. Consequently we have to live by faith. We have to believe God for what He says, every bit of it. And the disciples needed to learn how essential living by faith, it is everything in the Kingdom of God.

As we come to verse 37 of Luke 9, it's very apparent where we are in the life of Jesus because verse 37 says, "And it came about on the next day that when they had come down from the mountain," and we'll stop there.

The next day after the previous event, the previous event was the transfiguration of Jesus on the high mountain up in Galilee. Jesus had gone into that high mountain, taken Peter, James and John. There He had been transfigured or transformed, metamorphosized in front of them. They saw the glory of God shining out 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 were taken into the eternal Kingdom. They were given the epitome of all human joys. They literally were transferred from the world of faith to the world of sight. They were able to see what none of us could see, what nobody else could see. They saw the glory of Christ, Peter, James and John did. The other nine apostles didn't, they did. 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.

Now verse 37, it's the next day, very next day. Down from the mountain they come. Down from the dazzling drama of the eternal Kingdom, down from the glimpse, the sight of that eternal realm, a glorified Christ, the presence of Old Testament saints, down from that experience of seeing the eternal nature of Jesus unveiled and the shining glory of the *Shekinah*effused through Him, down from seeing the appearance of Moses and Elijah, themselves in glory and the affirmation of the Son's perfection by the voice of the Father Himself. All of this a preview of the glory of Christ which will be fully manifest in the world at His Second Coming.

We were glad to be there with Him, actually. I loved that section of Scripture. I understand why Peter said, "Let's build booths and stay here." Because when they come down, we have to come down, too. Luke brings us all down from that mountain and when we come down from the glory of that experience, we come into the troubled, corrupt, wicked painful reality of life in a sinful world. We come out of the realm of God into the realm of men. We come out of the Kingdom of Christ into the kingdom of Satan. We come down from the moment of ephemeral sight into earthly faith.

And what do we run into immediately but a disaster of all disasters, emblematic of what life is like in this fallen world. Verse 37 says, "A great multitude was there, met Jesus when He came down, and behold, a man from the multitude shouted out saying, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son for he's my only boy.' And behold, a spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth. And as it malls him, it scarcely leaves him. 'And I beg Your disciples to cast it out and they could not.' Jesus answered and said, 'O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.' And while he was still approaching, the demon dashed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God."

It's a pretty startling story, isn't it? Of all the elements in the story and there are a number that w3e could consider, we could spend time talking about the relationship in the family that must have existed with such a boy being part of a household, and the tenderness and compassion of Jesus giving him back to his father healed. We could talk about the whole issue of demonic possession and we could talk about how it is that demons function and how they are to be dealt with and so forth. But that would be to miss the point. Jesus tells us what the point is. If you have a red letter edition of Scripture you will find only one section in red, that's verse 41, and here Jesus speaks to the issue that this story is intended to point to, "O unbelieving, and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you?" It's about unbelief. It's about the twisted and distorted view of the Word of God that produces unbelief. That's what this is about. And out of it, Jesus is going to teach a great and profound lesson of faith. We're going to learn from this story about the importance of believing what God has said. And the power that flows from the promises that He has given.

Let's break this text down a little bit. Demon possession, that's how it starts; disciple perversion, that's what it moves to, and divine power, that's where it ends. Before we look at these three points, I can't help but contrast these two accounts. By the way, Matthew 17 contains this account, Mark 9 will interact with both of those, but in all three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, in which this account is given, it is given back to back with the transfiguration and they don't adjust it or move it around because it acts in such stark comparison and contrast to the glory of the mountain, this demonic demonstration in the valley. Just thinking about some of the contrasts here, I jotted down some things. One happened on a mountain, the other in the valley, sort of emblematic of being in the high place and the low place. On the mountain there was glory, in the valley there is tragedy. On the mountain Jesus Christ dominates in His bright shining majesty, in the valley Satan dominates in his ugly cruel violence. Two sons appear in these two texts, one is God-possessed, the other is demon-possessed. Two sons, one in whom His Father is well pleased, the other in whom his father is tortured with displeasure. Two sons appear, one Son fulfilling a glorious plan from ages past affirmed

by Old Testament and New Testament saints, the other son disassociated, disconnected, demented and chaotic without purpose or value to anybody. Two sons, one destroyed by demons, the other the destroyer of demons. Two sons, both given back to their father. The demon-possessed son delivered and given back to his father, the Son of God killed and raised and ascended back to His Father.

So the story begins with demon possession. Now just a word, sort of a little note, we don't have the time again to deal with all the elements of all the phenomena of demon possession, we've done it man times. If you want more information, you can get tapes on that that were connected to the synagogue account in the fourth chapter of Luke's gospel where we dealt in great detail with this matter of demon possession. But Jesus faced it all the time in His earthly ministry. Demons are always around. They're around today. They're around all the time. There are some doing their work in the lives of some of you sitting here this morning. Those who do not belong to the Kingdom of God belong to the kingdom of darkness. If you're not a child of God, you're a child of Satan, Jesus said, and you are victimized by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who works in the children of disobedience. It may not be manifest, it may not be diagnosed that way and that's largely the way Satan chooses to function and demons choose to function in sophisticated society. They don't want to be manifest, they didn't want to be manifest, they didn't want to be uncovered, they didn't want to be revealed when Jesus was on earth but they couldn't help themselves. Jesus unmasked them, exposed them in many cases by frightening them. You remember in the synagogue account, Luke 4, the man who was demon possessed heard Jesus preach and the demon heard the preaching too, knew what Jesus was saying and literally couldn't restrain himself and screamed out of the man. Jesus unmasked what society has a hard time unmasking today because demons choose to maintain a clandestine operation in sophisticated cultured societies. But they're doing their work.

There never was in history before or since such an open manifestation of demonic activity as during the ministry of Jesus Christ because He just literally blew them out of their cover as He delivered people from them. What the rest of the people couldn't see, He could see. And, of course, the demons put on a massive effort against Jesus during the time of His ministry, as well, probably came from all over the globe concentrating their efforts in the land of Palestine trying to thwart the work of the Savior. But the battle of the demons is a major one in the ministry of Jesus but Jesus had power over disease, He had power over death, and He had power over nature and He had power over demons. And here is an incident that displays that power and in my judgment this is the severest kind of demon possession that we see. This is extreme and severe.

Verse 37, "It came about on the next day when they had come down from the mountain, a great multitude met them." And that's not surprising. Down they come, Peter, James, John, Jesus, from their experience in the mountain, still in the glory and the glow of that incredible time. They get down

somewhere near Capernaum in the north part of Galilee, just at the tip of the Sea of Galilee, kind of the headquarter city. A great multitude met them as always the case was. The crowd was there. If Jesus was there, they were there. If Jesus wasn't there, they're waiting for Him to come. Drawn by His miracles, drawn by His ability to create food, and some drawn by His teaching, they were there. From Mark we learn also, Mark chapter 9 verse 14, that the scribes were there. They were the Jewish legal experts. They were the theological lawyers. They were the people who had the responsibility to uphold the law, the Judaistic traditional ceremonial law. And they were always around, along with the Pharisees, in the crowds that were following Jesus for the very purpose of discrediting Jesus, discrediting the Apostles, finding some reason to indict Jesus with a view to getting Him killed, removing Him.

They were arguing, according to Mark chapter 9, they were arguing with the disciples, probably the nine remaining Apostles who were down below. There was an argument going on and the arguments were always the same, always the same, they were always about how Jesus and His followers violated Jewish law. They were always built around some effort to indict. They were violating what was politically correct. They were violating the conventional demands of Judaism. And so this debate was going on, this is according to the ninth chapter of Mark.

Interestingly enough, it may well have been at the time of that debate, the day before, that the father had brought his demon-possessed son to these Apostles who were not able to cast that demon out. So not only were they in a debate with the scribes, but they may well have been embarrassed by their claims to be the agents of the true Messiah and then being unable to deliver this boy.

Well that's the scenario. Jesus comes down, the crowd is there, the mixed multitude with all...everybody at all levels of interest in Jesus, and including His enemies, the scribes seeking ways to discredit Him and surely a group of embarrassed Apostles.

Now we look into the crowd and what do we see? Verse 38, "Behold, a man..." unnamed, "from the multitude, however, somewhere in that crowd a man shouted out saying, 'Teacher, I beg You to look at my son for he's my only boy.'" So often we find in the gospel record that there's a crowd and Jesus focuses in on one individual and that's the case here. Matthew says the man came up, working his way through the crowd, bringing the boy with him. He moves through the crowd to get to the front to secure Jesus' attention so that Jesus can do something about this horrific situation. Mark 9:15 says that as soon as the crowd that had been waiting for Jesus saw Him coming, Mark says they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. Jesus coming down the mountain and there's this huge crowd running. Somewhere in the middle of the running crowd is a running man with a running boy. And they're trying to run a little faster to work their way through the crowd to get to the front. Matthew says that when he finally got to the place where he thought Jesus could hear him, Matthew says he was falling on his knees before Him, showing the man's reverence, showing his humility, literally

collapses on his knees in the presence of Jesus, at that point shouted out. Why did he shout if he was near Jesus? He shouted because he had to shout over the din of the crowd. Can you imagine that everybody had the same request that he did, all the sick and all the possessed and all the other folks who were there who wanted something from Jesus?

Before we consider what Luke records, "Teacher," and so forth, Matthew has something in his record that adds to what the man said. Matthew says he said, "Lord," first. Whether or not he believed in the deity of Jesus Christ we don't know at this point, but I believe that he likely did. And I'll tell you a little bit later why. But he's saying "Lord" probably in the highest sense, "I recognize that You have the power of God, that You are the power of God over demons." Jesus, of course, had healed people, cast out demons, raised dead people and this was common knowledge. Here was a man who shows his humility, shows his reverence and by saying "Lord" affirms the highest possible title because that is the name which is above every name, the Lord. So Matthew says he said, "Lord, have mercy on my son for he is a lunatic," Matthew 17:15, "and is very ill for he often falls into the fire and into the water."

So here comes the man. He believes Jesus has the power to deliver his son. He believes Jesus is Lord. He falls down in reverent posture and humility. Mark 9:21 says that he explained to Jesus that the boy had been afflicted this way since childhood, so many he was by now a teenager and this had been going on in his life since he was a little child, causing many years of unbelievable, unbearable, indescribable horror for the family. Open fires, by the way, were common in that part of the world. Unless you think it doesn't get cold in Israel and you wouldn't need a fire, guess again. It does, it gets very cold. And in and around Jerusalem, of course, you're at very, very high elevation and there are very cold days and nights there, particularly through the winter season and even occasionally snow and fires were used all the time. But not just fires for warmth but fires for cooking. And what the demon did in his effort to destroy this boy was to slam the boy into fires, open fires. Whenever there was an open fire around and the demon determined to do so, he would literally overpower the boy's body and slam the boy into an open fire. Another thing that was present everywhere was a well, or a pool. Obviously they needed water and that's why there were wells and pools all over the area. Whenever there was such a pool or well present, the boy needed to be protected because it would be the desire of the demon to throw the boy into the water, drown him there. Furthermore Mark 9:17 says that he was possessed with a spirit that made him mute. And Jesus in Mark 9:25 called it a deaf and dumb spirit.

This is just horrific. Here is a boy that is so dominated by a demon, can't hear and he can't speak, and the demon is doing everything he can to slam him into a fire or drown him in a pool. And the father has to try to protect his son year after year after year from this horrific power. The father knew what Jesus verified. The father says in verse 39, "A spirit seizes him." He knew it wasn't

psychological. He knew it wasn't physiological. He knew it was demonic. He knew he was possessed with a spirit that made him mute and Jesus called him a deaf and dumb spirit. The demon was excessively, extremely violent. You remember the maniac who cut himself and lived in the tombs but he had legion of those demons to create the violence in his life. This demon, this spirit alone was severely violent.

You say, "Well how did this little boy get himself in this situation?" Just because Satan determined to do this, the demon determined to take this boy's life. And the boy, apart from the knowledge of God, had no protection. I think you can explain a lot of what is explained clinically and psychologically in terms of childhood behavior and adolescent behavior and even adult behavior by demonic activity today, particularly the deeper young people go into the kingdom of darkness, the more susceptible they become to the wretchedness of this demonic world. There's no way to know why this happened to this little boy, it's not important for us to know that. If it was, the Lord would have told us. But it's an illustration of the fact that everybody who is outside the Kingdom of God is outside the power of Satan. It started with this little boy even in his childhood. We don't know at particularly...at what age that started. We could assume it started when he was old enough to choose what is evil against what is right. But we don't know why in particular this boy except when you get to this story, then you know why, in order that Jesus might manifest His glory in healing him. Just like the blind man was blind, they said, "Why was he born blind? Why was he born blind? Did his parents do something? Why?" And the answer of Jesus was, "He was born blind for the glory of God." The Lord allowed this to happen in this case to this boy for the glory of God, for the demonstration of power and the lesson of faith that was going to come out of his deliverance. So the father pleads his case. In the words of Matthew, "Have mercy on us," and the description I gave you from Matthew.

Let's look then at Luke's account. Luke says he also called him "Teacher," which indicates to me that he responded to what Jesus said. He is not only his Lord, but He is his teacher. This further leads me to believe that the man...the man believed what Jesus said. In fact, in the...in one of the other accounts we'll look at next week as we finish the story, this is the man who said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief," remember that? So I think the man had faith in the person of Jesus and the teaching of Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "Teacher," he got the idea, he understood that the primary ministry of Jesus was as a teacher. "Teacher," *didaskolae(?)*, the one who gives the truth of God. "I beg you to look at my son." *Epiblepo* doesn't mean to look as to glance, it means to look upon with concern. I found a translation of it in James chapter 2, the same word. It's an intense word, any time you have a preposition in the front of a verb, it is intensified. In James 2:3, "Pay special attention," is how it's translated. That's what he's saying, "Could You please out of all of this crowd of needy people pay special attention to my son?" To look upon someone with concern, to look upon someone with care, compassion. In the huge overflowing crowd of needs, the poor beleaguered father pleads for Jesus to single out his son. And then to make the need more compelling, he adds, "For he's my

only...my only..." italics adds *boy* or *son*. "He's my only son." So he brought his only begotten son before God's only begotten Son. And this was a major issue in Jewish society. To have a son was critical, to pass on the family name, to pass on the heritage, to pass on the rights of primogenitor. This was critical and for a woman not have a son was a terrible stigma. Well this family was blessed by God with a son but look what a horrific situation had come to pass in the son's life. And this was the only hope for the progeny of the family, the only hope for the perpetuity of the family, the only hope for the future. And look what kind of son he was. Luke, by the way, is the only one who notes that the man said, "He's my only son." But Luke seems to have a certain pathos, a certain tenderness about him because it was he who referred to Jairus' daughter as his only daughter, and he who referred to the dead son of the widow of Nain as her only son. He is the one who puts "only" in there on three occasions. So in his compassion, Luke expresses what the father expressed that it was not only a horrible thing to have to deal with a child like this, but to realize that this was their only hope for the future.

The father, further diagnosing the boy's trauma explains, verse 39, "And behold, a spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth. And as it mauls him it scarcely leaves him." The father understood that it was a demon spirit, a fallen angel, suddenly comes and causes the boy to scream, exhibiting the demon's control of his vocal chords as well as his body. It throws him into a convulsion. The Greek verb *sparasso*, it literally means that, a seizure, probably slamming him to the ground with such force as to cause a concussion, as to traumatize the brain which results with foaming at the mouth. This would be supported by Mark 9. The father says this, "Whenever it seizes him, it smashes him to the ground, slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out." Those are characteristics of seizure, of severe brain trauma.

And then it says..."As it mauls him," which is a good translation of *suntribo. Suntribo*means to crush, to shatter, to break into pieces, very destructive verb. This demon comes and smashes this boy to the ground, affecting his brain, throwing him into seizures in which he stiffens out, grinds his teeth and foams at the mouth. Particularly the demon would endeavor to do that into a fire or into a pool of water which would result in the death of the boy. And then at the end he says, "It scarcely leaves him...scarcely leaves him." The adverb there "scarcely" means with difficulty. Of course, because he has deadly intent, and so he keeps it up, it's relentless, it's non-stop, it's prolonged. This is the severest, the severest single demonic assault in the New Testament record and may still be even today although it's not manifest as such an explanation of behavior in the lives of young people and even adults.

Demon possession moves then to disciple perversion. I hate to use the word perversion because you might think I mean moral perversion and the disciples were not morally perverted. I only use it

because Jesus used it in verse 41. It may sound strange but it's exactly what He said. Verse 40, "And I begged Your disciples to cast it out." And somebody might say, "Well why would he do that anyway? I mean, he shouldn't have expected anything out of those blockheads. Why would you do that?" Well the answer is because they had the power to cast out demons. This is very important, this is critical to the lesson of faith here, folks. "I begged Your disciples to cast it out," that was a reasonable thing to do because...go back to chapter 9 verse 1..., "He called the Twelve together, gave them power and authority over all the demons." How many of the demons? All the demons. He told them, "You have power over all the demons and to heal diseases. And he sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to perform healing...in verse 6...and departing they began going about among the villages preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. This went on for a number of weeks...verse 10...when the Apostles returned they gave an account to Him of all that they had done." They were given the power over all demons. They were given the power to heal diseases. In fact, Matthew chapter 10 is worth reading, Matthew's account of the same commission. Matthew 10 verse 8, "Heal the sick, raise the dead,, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." Jesus said, "I give you that power, now go do it."

In Mark, I believe it's in Mark 6:13, "They went out, they preached that men should repent. They were casting out many demons." He gave them the power to do it. He commanded them to do it. They did it. Now remember, they literally were sent out two by two with this power to blitz in one final sort of gospel blitz attended by these powerful signs to gospelize, as it were, for one last time Galilee. It wouldn't take long with the disciples going everywhere, multiplying the presence of Jesus by twelve times, for everybody to know that they had demonstrated this power. The word would spread rapidly. And it did. And this man probably the day before when Jesus was up in the mountain with the three came to the nine based upon their reputation and what they had done and asks them to do what evidently they had the power to do. And all three gospels record the same result...all three gospels in one way or another say what verse 40 says, "And they could not." They couldn't do it.

Why? They had the power. They had the commission. They had the experience. They already had the success. Why can't they do it? Why? What was wrong?

Matthew 17:19 and 20 gives the answer. "The disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, 'Why could we not cast it out? Why...why couldn't we do it?'" which means they must have tried. "And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith. Because of the littleness of your faith." There was no lack of available power. There was no lack of experience. There was no lack of knowing whatever a formula they might have known. There was no lack of commission. There was no lack of privilege. There was no lack of right. There was a lack of faith. And Jesus says, "You didn't believe you could do it." They must have concluded that this was way over the top. This was too much for them, too severe. They had done it before by the power that had been delegated to them from Christ, but this was more than they could hope to see, deliverance. There was a severity about this. There was an extremity in this situation that was beyond their ability to believe. And Jesus answered and

said, "O unbelieving and perverted generation, you don't believe because your view of Me and My Word is perverted," distorted is what it means, twisted, wrong. You know, He says, "How long shall I be with you and put up with you?"

Jesus suffered a lot of things in this life in the incarnation in his humiliation. He suffered, as we all know, physically, at the time of His beating and crowning with thorns and crucifixion. And He suffered hate and mockery and blasphemy and all of that. But we also find here that He suffered this personal disappointment and pain over defective followers. He was used to perfect angelic service, perfect love, perfect devotion, perfect obedience, perfect power functioning instantaneously. And here He was with these disciples and He was having to learn obedience by suffering the wounds inflicted on Him by those to whom He had given His life. This is really painful, painful for us. It's painful for us to be wounded by those to whom we give ourselves. And so there's some real pathos here, there's some pain, "O unbelieving and perverted generation." Who does generation refer to? *Genea*, the word *genea* means contemporaries. Basically that's what it means. "You who are the unbelieving ones." I'll tell you, it has to be the Apostles, they can't be excluded because when they came to Jesus and said, "Why can't we do it?" He said because of your littleness of faith. They were the ones He had in mind. Well it's certainly true to say it included Israel, the whole nation was unbelieving, they were an unbelieving contemporary generation. It certainly included the religious experts, the Pharisees and the scribes. They too were guilty of not believing, even though ample evidence had been given that Jesus was the Messiah. But sadly the primary group in focus here is the one that were the biggest disappointment to Him and He says, "How long shall I be with you and put up with you?" It's getting old, guys, that you don't believe.

How many times did he say to them, "O you of little faith?" And what was He asking them to believe? Was He asking them to believe that they could by their faith energize a healing? No. He was asking them to believe what He told them, "You have power over all demons, just believe what I told you. If I didn't tell you that, if I didn't reveal that, then I wouldn't expect you to believe it and believing isn't some power that makes something happen that I haven't said would happen. Just believe what I told you and it gets old when you don't...when you don't."

They were a *diastrepho*, distorted, diverted, twisted, crooked contemporary group that should have known better. Their view of God was twisted and so they were faithless, *apistos*. They didn't believe because they didn't think that the power delegated to them could include someone this bad. But they had to learn what we have to learn, folks. If God said it, believe it. And if you don't believe it and you don't act on it, it's a grave disappointment to Him.

Now we're going to see what Jesus does about this and we're going to see how He teaches them the lesson of faith and we're going to see how that applies to your life and my life. And what are the

things in the Scripture that we're supposed to believe the Lord for. And when we don't, He's disappointed. And you can think of a lot of them right now. One of them, "My God shall supply all your need." Now if you don't believe that for one moment, the Lord's going to say how long am I going to put up with you? How long do I have to be with you and you still have a distorted view of what I said?

So, back to where we started. He indicts the disciples and says, "You are faithless and you are distorted and you are exasperating and frustrating because you have not believed what I specifically told you. You have power over all demons." That little word "all" is really important there, isn't it? Can't you believe me? You can't live this life, beloved, as a Christian if you don't believe what God said in His Word. First you need to know what He said, and then you need to believe it. And if you believe it, He'll reward you with blessing. And if you don't, you'll frustrate Him and He may well have to rebuke you as He rebuked them. If you're going to say you're a person of faith and you live by faith, then what that means when it flushes out is, "If God said it, I believe it and I'm going to live my life that way."

Lord, as we end our service this morning, we do so with anticipation, knowing that we've only just begun to see the unfolding of this incredible story. But we have enough to meditate on, enough to chew on, enough to think about already in our hearts, having been exposed to what we've heard up to this point. We feel the sting of the indictment that the disciples received that day for we too have exhibited a lack of faith in Your supply, a lack of faith in Your love, a lack of faith in Your grace, in Your power, in Your might, in Your wisdom, in Your purpose, a lack of faith in that consummate promise that all things are working together by Your power to that end which You have determined is good. Father, we want to live by faith and enjoy the assurance of things hoped for and the confidence of things we can't yet see because You've promised that You will work all things to Your glory and our good. May we be a people of faith, not a nebulas unfounded, ungrounded faith but a people who believe what You said simply because You said it, that's enough for us. And we'll base our time and eternity on that. We thank You for this confidence which is encouraged in us through the work of the Holy Spirit. We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

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