

Jesus Came Down and Fought the Devil

Luke 9:37-45

Key Verse: 9:44

“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.”

In this passage Jesus comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration and confronts the work of the devil on two fronts: through a boy who was possessed by an evil spirit, and in the hearts of his disciples. In dealing with the boy, Jesus revealed his power to drive out demons. In helping his disciples, Jesus planted the truth which was God’s wisdom from above. We are all involved in a spiritual battle, whether we know it or not. We are fighting spiritual battles on our campuses, in our workplaces, even in our homes or common life houses. It is essential to learn how to have faith in Jesus and to base our faith on Jesus' words. Then we can win our spiritual battles and have real victory, both personally and as a community.

I. Jesus heals a boy with an evil spirit (37-43a)

In this part we can find a contrast in the way a father saw his son’s problem and the way Jesus saw it. Although the father’s view was correct, it fell short of seeing the root problem. Through Jesus’ words, we can find the root problem and how to solve it in order to win the battle: We need to repent of our unbelief and have faith in Jesus.

Look at verse 37. **“The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.”** Jesus must have been glowing from his glorious experience on the mountain. His three disciples Peter, John and James, had been so amazed at Jesus’ glory, and the appearance of Moses and Elijah, that they forgot all of their small problems. Matthew and Mark tell us that they began to discuss what “rising from the dead” meant, and how Elijah would fulfill prophecy. Jesus’ prayer had been answered. Jesus was fully strengthened and his disciples’ hearts were opened. But Jesus had no time to relax and enjoy this. For while God was working mightily on the mountain, the devil had been working desperately in the valley. As soon as Jesus came down, a large crowd met him. Crowds had often come to Jesus, as people sought his help in many ways. But there was something different about this crowd. They looked terribly oppressed and were subdued, for they had witnessed the work of a demon.

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The tragic story is told in verses 38-40, by the father of a suffering boy. This boy was his only child. To a normal father, his children are most precious. This man must have loved his son more than his own life. But something was threatening to destroy the boy. The father explained to Jesus in verse 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.”** The boy must have tried to live a normal life like other boys: going to school, playing sports, and so on. But while doing so, he would suddenly be attacked by an evil spirit. This evil spirit would take control of the boy and throw him into convulsions, tossing him around like a rag doll. Each attack left him more damaged than before. The boy’s life was being destroyed before the eyes of his father.

We must acknowledge that demons exist. They are invisible enemies who want to destroy mankind. Jesus called Satan a liar and a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44). It was Satan who planted doubt in the first man and woman and led them to disobey God. In this way he murdered their souls; they were cut off from God and lost paradise. The root of all human miseries can be traced to the devil’s work. The most important battle every human being fights is against the devil. This is why Paul said, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the...spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”** (Eph 6:12).

To his credit, the father of the boy knew the real problem of his son. It was not merely a physical malady or a psychological disorder. It was the work of an evil spirit. So the father sought spiritual help. He had come to the disciples, begging them to drive out the spirit. But they had failed. In the past, when Jesus sent them out for fieldwork training, the disciples had driven out many demons. Success came when they listened to Jesus very carefully and obeyed his words. But since then, they had become rebellious toward Jesus’ teaching about his suffering and death. They were struggling with doubt and fear. Then, when they tried to drive out the demon, they failed. Their failure added to the growing sense that the demon was in charge. The father, and the crowd, were disappointed with the disciples.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 41. **“O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.’**” We learn two things here.

First, Jesus saw the root problem as the unbelief of the generation. To some, unbelief does not seem like a serious sin. While they regard murder or rape as serious sins, many think lightly of unbelief. To some, believing or not believing in

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God is merely a personal decision; they think that believing or not believing are both morally valid options. But one person's decision not to believe in God can have serious consequences for a whole society. The Bible teaches that unbelief is the root of sin and the root cause of all the wickedness that perverts God's world. Romans 1:21 says, **"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."** Men know that God exists. Creation gives us irrefutable evidence of God's eternal power and divine nature. Men have no excuse for not believing in God. Men deliberately suppress the truth that God exists in order to avoid their responsibility to him. This is unbelief.

Jesus indicted the generation for its unbelief, and held the entire generation responsible for the perverse scene before him. The father was responsible. Perhaps he had been negligent in teaching his son the word of God, like many parents in our time. Some parents are diligent in teaching their children math, science, languages, music, sports and how to make money. At the same time, they ignore spiritual education with the word of God. Some parents send their children to church to learn morality, but they do not go themselves. This hypocritical approach fails. **When parents do not believe in God from their hearts and make a believing atmosphere in their homes, their children easily become unbelieving. This is not the children's fault; it is the parents' responsibility and can result in the work of demons in kids.** The religious leaders were also responsible. They should have been deeply concerned about the spiritual development of children in their nation. But many were too busy with political concerns, so they ignored children with problems. There must have been several religious leaders who knew this boy and his father personally. But they refused to take any responsibility, saying, "That's his problem." **In our time, those who influence the school curricula are responsible for the unbelieving influence it gives to children. School prayer has been prohibited, the Ten Commandments cannot be posted, and evolution is taught as fact for the purpose of denying God's existence. As a result, many children become unbelieving and, thus, vulnerable to demons. Biblically speaking, it should not surprise us that horrific crimes are committed in schools as a result. Those who hear about the evils and tragedies of the world and just ignore them are also responsible. As members of a community or a nation we have a duty to pray for the spiritual wellbeing of our society. We cannot ignore the spiritual problems of the world; this is irresponsible, and a kind of unbelief. Unbelief grieves Jesus. Jesus does not want to stay among the unbelieving. At this moment, let's repent of our unbelief and ask God to use us as godly parents, spiritual leaders, and good stewards of God's world.**

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Second, Jesus said, “Bring your son to me.” Though the entire generation was unbelieving, and demon activity was furious, Jesus was not daunted at all. Though there seemed to be no one who would take responsibility, and no one who could help, there was one: Jesus. Jesus said, **“Bring your son to me.”** Jesus was willing to help, and Jesus was able to help. Jesus invited the father to bring his son to him. Here we learn that Jesus rebukes our unbelief in order to plant faith in our hearts. **Then, what does it mean to bring our sons to Jesus? Primarily it means to bring their names before God in prayer. It also means to share the word of God with them so that they can meet Jesus personally.** Some time ago, one woman missionary was deeply troubled by the spiritual condition of her son. So she made a decision to pray for him for 1,000 days. Now his faith is evident for all to see. Another godly woman among us was deeply troubled over her son when he was suffering from physical and emotional wounds. She cried out to God for him. Now he is healthy. Let’s bring our sons to Jesus in prayer! Let’s bring all of America’s sons to Jesus in prayer. Whatever our spiritual problem may be, let’s bring it to Jesus in prayer.

The father responded to Jesus’ invitation. He began to bring his son to Jesus. However, the demon did not simply surrender. Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. It looked awful. It seemed that coming to Jesus was making the boy worse. However, this was the devil’s last ditch deception. Jesus took immediate action. Jesus rebuked the evil spirit. Jesus is God who has authority over any demon. The demon had no choice but to depart from the boy. Then Jesus touched the boy with his healing hand. Jesus healed his mind, so that he could think clean and healthy thoughts, and reason properly. Jesus healed his heart and restored his emotional stability. Jesus healed the wounds of his body and made him strong and restored his handsomeness. Then Jesus gave him back to his father, renewing their love relationship. The boy must have thanked Jesus with all his heart, and he must have thanked his father, too. Jesus fully restores anyone who comes to him from all the devil’s works.

When people saw what had happened, they were amazed at the greatness of God. They were in awe of God’s power. They were filled with wonder at his love and compassion. In this way, Jesus restored God’s reign over people in an unbelieving generation and they tasted the kingdom of God. Let’s believe that Jesus can drive out any demon and bring the reign of God to any community. All we must do is repent of our unbelief and invite Jesus in with faith.

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II. Jesus foretells his betrayal to the disciples (43b-45)

The people in the crowd were marveling at all that Jesus did. They must have looked at the boy, smiling and healthy, holding his father's hand, and then looked at Jesus and said, "Praise God." Then they looked at the father. His face was no longer marked by lines of suffering. Great joy was beaming from him. As they heard the father laugh from deep within, they again said, "Praise God." A "Jesus celebration party" was about to begin. The disciples were very happy. They were also relieved that Jesus turned their failure into a great success. Worries forgotten, they began to celebrate with the crowd. Then, Jesus said to them, **"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men."** Why did Jesus say this, disturbing their joyful mood?

It is clear that Jesus had a sense of urgency about his teaching. However, Jesus knew that the disciples would not like what he had to say. They had responded poorly the last time he spoke of his suffering and death. Jesus tried to impress upon them the importance of listening. Then Jesus gave them straight truth. As we know, Jesus is gentle and humble in heart. Jesus welcomes all kinds of weak people and weary people and gives us rest for our souls. But Jesus is an uncompromising teacher of truth to his disciples. Jesus was like a man cutting down a big tree. It would not fall with one stroke of the ax, but needed many strokes. Jesus was going to keep telling the truth until the disciples accepted it. Whether they liked it or not, whether they felt good about it or not, Jesus gave them this message. For it is the only way of salvation that God has given to mankind.

What was the message? It was this: **"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men."** Jesus spoke of his betrayal. When he did so, he was not suggesting that it might happen. He was foretelling the truth of God which was written in the Scriptures. Although they did not know it at the time, the betrayer would be one of them. Just hearing about Jesus' betrayal must have sent a cold chill down their backs. It meant the end of their dream of a glorious earthly kingdom. It meant that a painful trial was coming upon them. They felt shaky. Their human relationships began to seem shallow. They became aware of uncommitted elements in their own hearts. The devil was right there beside them, tempting them to betray Jesus and take an easier way. It is a lie. Still, this temptation comes to us as well. How should we respond? We must listen to Jesus' words. Jesus' words are the absolute truth of God which defeat the devil's work in our hearts.

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Jesus' words tell us something important about him. Jesus knew who he was. Jesus calls himself, "The Son of Man." As we have studied before, this refers to the one who receives sovereign power and glory from the Father. He reigns over the world, and is worshiped by people of every tribe, language and nation. Jesus was this Son of Man, as was confirmed on the Mount of Transfiguration. At the same time, Jesus fully embraced his coming betrayal. As we know, betrayal may be the most painful thing a human being can endure. Yet he faced this fact with resolve and determination. It was Jesus' obedience to God's will, as foretold by the Scriptures. The actual fulfillment came when Satan entered Judas Iscariot, who then sold Jesus to the religious leaders for 30 silver coins. Though it was a wicked act, prompted by Satan, it was also God's way of destroying Satan. Fighting the spiritual battle was not just about rebuking evil spirits with divine authority. It also required enduring betrayal and finally giving his life on the cross as a ransom for our sins. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. And without forgiveness of sins, there is no way to ransom mankind from the clutches of the devil. To save the boy he had just healed, and all who would trust in him, Jesus had to go the way of betrayal and the cross. Isaiah said, **"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days..."** (Isa 53:10a).

Look at verse 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."** The disciples were not stupid men. They had normal intelligence. But they had to struggle with spiritual truths they could not fully grasp. They must have felt like men with vertigo, dizzy with the truth they were hearing. In addition to not understanding, they also were afraid to ask him about it. They had a fear problem. Perhaps they were afraid they would suffer. Perhaps they were afraid they would lose their human dreams. In any case, they did not trust Jesus enough to accept his words with faith. In this part, we learn that Jesus wants his disciples to accept his words with faith. Jesus wants us to accept his teachings even when they don't make sense at the moment. Jesus wants us to accept his teachings, even when he tells us of painful and difficult things. Only faith based on Jesus' words will lead us to certain victory in the end.

In this passage we have learned that Jesus fought a spiritual battle with the devil and won the victory. We also learn how to share his victory. First, we must repent our unbelief and put our trust in Jesus. Second, we must listen to Jesus' teachings even when we don't fully understand what they mean, or when they sound hard. We must build our faith on the truth of Jesus' words. Then we can go

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through sufferings without fear, in the assurance of final victory. May God bless you with great victory in your spiritual struggle as you trust and obey Jesus in this generation.