

How to Grow Strong in the Faith, Part 3

Luke 9:42-45

So as we turn our attention to God's Word, I'd like to invite you to open your Bibles to Luke chapter 9, verses 37-45. We're talking about resurrection. Resurrection presupposes a death. Resurrection assumes that a death has occurred. Without death there is no resurrection from the dead. I think the logic on that is pretty sound. Death is a part of our world. Seems we can't turn on the news anymore without seeing some horrific act of death and destruction.

Death is something we're all familiar with in our time and our age. But resurrection, resurrection is something that is truly rare. The passage before us today in Luke chapter 9 is set in the world that we know. It's a world that is dominated by death, the fear of death, the sorrow of death. But emerging from the shadow of death is the power of resurrection, and this passage, in a unique way, prefigures Christ's resurrection. It also highlights the necessary prerequisite to participate in his

resurrection, which is faith. Faith. Saving faith is what's required to see and experience and participate in the resurrection. Faith is the key.

But again, you can't have a resurrection without a death, and so we've got to talk about death. That is the setting, actually, for Luke 9:37-45. It's a setting of death. It's the cruel, destructive power at work of the demonic. Look at it, there, in Luke 9:37, "On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him," met Jesus. "And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, 'Teacher, I beg you, look at my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it shatters him, will hardly leave him. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' Jesus answered, 'Oh, faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?'"

I'm going to ask you to stop there for a moment. At first glance, it appears that what is needed here is exorcism. Cast out the demon, and the problem is solved. But the need, here, goes way beyond that. The need, here, literally, is for life

from the dead. This man's one and only son is literally being murdered as they speak by a demon. So that's what the father's really describing in verse 39 in graphic detail, and he's using violent language to describe it, which we've studied already.

We learned from Mark's Gospel in addition to what we read here, that the boy is also deaf and dumb. He's unable to hear, he's unable to communicate. His young mind is, is completely subdued by this demonic spirit that inhabits him. Matthew and Mark both say "the demon often used to cast him into fire and into water," literally to destroy him. So he's badly burned. He's nearly been drowned on a number of occasions because the demon's intention is to murder him.

In fact, Jesus said, when he said, "Bring your son here," look at verse 42, it says, "While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit," and as he did, Mark 9:26 tells us that "after crying out, convulsing him terribly, the demon came out, but the boy was like a corpse." Most of the people in the crowd, a large crowd that day, said, "He's dead." "He's dead." Huge crowd of people.

At the time they're living, everyone there is familiar with death. They see it all the time. Death wasn't sanitized and hidden from public view like it is in our day, hidden in mortuaries and funeral homes and the like. People knew what death was. They knew what a corpse looked like. And they said, "He's dead." Notice verse 42 says Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, he healed the boy, and then he gave him back to his father, or as Mark put it, Jesus took that lifeless boy by the hand, he lifted him up, and he arose. That's resurrection language.

Jesus is in this situation, raised this boy literally from the dead. He has snatched this boy's soul from the jaws of death. And he not only banished the demon, as we can see; he restored the boy's life. Luke tells us in verse 42, "He healed the boy." Fractures from being beaten onto the ground. He was healed. Charred, melted, scarred skin from fire, burns completely restored. Any injury that came from water entering into his lungs through all the spasmic activity, any trauma, internal and external injuries, whatever damage that demon had caused in trying to kill him, everything's made whole.

But the healing isn't just about his physical body. It includes the restoration of a relationship. Again, Luke is sure to include to include, and he's the only one who includes this detail, verse 42, "Jesus gave the boy back to his father." He healed the boy's deafness, his muteness. He restored his ability to communicate so that he could talk to his dad, so he could hear his dad's instruction, so he could learn from him. The son is restored to his father, returned to him. And the father is returned and restored to his son, relationship restored. This is Jesus' power.

And that's why, first part of verse 43, "all were astonished at the majesty of God." They saw the majesty of God. That's all that could explain this, the majesty of God and the authority and the power and the compassion of Jesus Christ to perform what is really a multi-faceted miracle, here. It's a resurrection miracle. This is life from the dead. It's a supernatural act of full and complete restoration.

Now having said that, I don't mean to be a killjoy, here. I don't want to throw a wet blanket on the joy of this resurrection miracle, but can I point something out? The son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus and his wife, the son of the father here in our text, in the course of time, they're all going to die. They're all going to die again. In other words, resurrection miracles here before Christ's resurrection, only temporary. Restored them to a condition of living again, but it's still life in a fallen world. Death is still in effect. All three of these subjects are going to die again.

That's partly what's got to prompt Jesus' lament there in verse 41, "Oh, faithless and twisted generation. How long am I to be with you and bear with you?" In other words, I'm not going to be physically present to raise all your sons and daughters from the dead. So if you refuse to be a believing generation, if you turn away from faith, you're doomed to die. Not just dying physically. I'm talking about something more profound. I'm talking about dying spiritually. I'm talking about what comes after this life. I'm talking about your eternity.

Folks, our world is having a hard, hard time, denying the immaterial nature of humanity. They can't explain evil in the world. They can't explain what goes on in the heart and the soul of mankind. They can't explain it in material terms. They are struggling and grasping for answers and coming up with all kinds of ridiculous nonsense to explain what it is to be human. But you and I know in our heart of hearts, we know for certain that this life is not all there is. We know for certain that there is life beyond the grave. Jesus is coming, not just to raise little boys and girls, as beautiful of a picture as that is of his compassion, his mercy, his power. He's coming to raise people for the rest of eternity, to give them life, to escape death.

And that's why we're seeing in this text that Jesus wants to help us here to see that faith is the key. Believing is the key. Faith is the necessary prerequisite for seeing and experiencing and participating in the power of Christ's resurrection. His is a resurrection that does not avoid the grave. It goes through the grave and conquers the grave and comes out the other side, victor. And that's why we need to consider the evidence of Christ's glory in this event, in this resurrection power. But we need to reason through that evidence

with a believing heart. We need to think about the proof and the evidence that's given to us with the eyes of faith.

Jesus' authority in rebuking the unclean spirit, his power in healing the boy, his compassion in restoring the boy to his father, all that evidence is only meaningful and confirming about who Jesus actually is to those who believe. If you do not believe, none of that evidence matters to you. Something has to be changed in you. Also, we need to listen to the testimony to Christ's majesty. Even the unbelievers in the crowd, even the scribes who were there to accuse Jesus, to trip him up, to condemn him, to discredit him, even they couldn't deny his supernatural power. They're all astonished at the majesty of God in Christ. They bowed to the majesty they saw in Christ. But again, that's only going to register for you if you're reading and thinking about this with believing presuppositions.

There are many today who consider the claims of Scripture. They read this book as if it's a human book only. They read with an anti-supernatural bias. They hear all of this that we're hearing with unbelieving, Christ-rejecting presuppositions. And I'm just telling you, folks, this is exactly what keeps them

enslaved to sin, keeps them under the power of demonic influence. And ultimately, it leads to the eternal pain and indignity of death. If you do not believe, unbelief means death forever. This couldn't be more serious. But belief, faith in God's Word, trusting in him, who he is, what he's communicated, it means life from the dead. It means resurrection forever.

And that takes us to a third point in our outline. If we're going to turn away from this twisted, unbelieving generation, which, as we can see in the world around us, is just filled with death and sorrow and sadness and pain, if we're going to turn away from this unbelieving generation we need to, number three, we need to reflect on the fulfillment of Christ's Gospel. We need to reflect upon the fulfillment of Christ's Gospel.

We need to listen to the plan of divine salvation, hear these Gospel words from Jesus Christ with the ears of faith. Have a look at verses 43-44. It says there, "While all were marveling at everything," Jesus, "was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.'" Stop there.

“Let these words sink into your ears.” Jesus is saying, You need to think deeply about this. He wants them to reflect on these words, which is really just a summary statement on the Gospel. The crowd is marveling at everything he’s doing, and while they are marveling, while they’re all aghast and in awe, Jesus wants to make sure his disciples don’t miss the point. So he turns and says this to them. And the contrast that Luke, the narrator, wants us to see is between what’s seen by the crowd and what’s heard by the disciples. It’s a contrast between what’s perceived with the eyes and then what’s perceived by the ears, which in the Hebrew way of speaking, hearing refers to what they think about. It’s not just hearing; it’s thinking about it. It’s what they come to understand. It’s then how they live in obedience to it.

The eyes of the crowd are on everything Jesus is doing. They’re interested in the spectacle. But Jesus turns to his men, and he speaks the truth to the ears of his disciples. He calls their attention to what they can hear, what they can think about, what they can reflect upon. For “faith comes by hearing.” So when Jesus gets a chance to speak to his disciples, when he

turns to stabilize and strengthen their faith, a faith that had failed. A faith, they didn't have faith to cast out this demon, and they should have.

Jesus had commissioned them for that very purpose back in the beginning of Luke 9. He empowered them for that purpose. He gave them authority for that purpose. What was the disconnect? Why couldn't they cast out the demon for themselves? Because they didn't believe. They failed in faith. So he turns to strengthen their faith, and as he does so, he doesn't point to the public spectacle of that resurrection miracle, as important as it is. He doesn't say, Guys, don't you believe, yet? Didn't you just see? The boy raised from the dead? Look at him! See the power that that takes? I'm mighty! No, he speaks words to them. He gives them sentences, prophetic words for them to hear, listen to, reflect upon. "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

First, let's consider these words, words that really do constitute a second prediction of his crucifixion. Luke just gives us the summary, but they do take us back and remind us of what Jesus said the first time he predicted his death. Look at,

back at verse 22 in Luke chapter 9. It says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes." That's basically the entire religious establishment, everybody who was important in that day and admired and respected. The elders, the chief priests, the scribes, they were all people everybody aspired to be like. Jesus says, "The Son of Man must" be rejected by all of them, "and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Secondly, why does he want these words to, sink into, their ears? What is that about? It's an idiom, a colloquial expression. Literally, Put these words into your ears. Put them inside there. Or, really, then, Listen carefully, meditatively, reflectively. Think deeply about these words. Pay close attention, listen very carefully, store it up in your memory, roll it over in your minds, and take it to heart. That's the idea.

Well, why? Several reasons to reflect deeply upon Jesus' prophecy, here, of his rejection, and death, and resurrection.

Let's start with the rejection. Why do we need to think deeply about Jesus' rejection? When Jesus had predicted his coming rejection, the disciples had a really, really hard time believing it because every sign had pointed to his widespread acceptance by the common people. They loved him. He was popular. he was celebrated. People loved listening to him. They loved to see the comeuppance of the religious muckety-mucks as Jesus would embarrass them in public. They especially liked his works of power and mercy. They liked the feeding miracles. Free food is great!

Outwardly, there appears to be acceptance and wonder, but Jesus wants them to stop and understand that inwardly, these unbelieving people are soon going to reject Christ. They're going to call for his death. These are the very ones, actually, who are going to deliver Jesus over to suffering and death, death by crucifixion. What? How can that be? What makes the difference? Ah, the presence or absence of faith, that's what makes the difference.

Within six to nine months of speaking these words, Jesus is going to enter Jerusalem, and the crowds, they're going to greet

them. Jesus, his disciples, they're gonna greet him with cheering. They're gonna greet them with shouts of joy because they believed he was their Messiah, and in a political sense they really wanted him to rule the world because they are Jews. They wanted to rule with him, finally put their feet on the necks of the Romans for awhile.

They believed he would rule on the throne of his father David, that he would reign as king. Zechariah 9:9 told them what to look for when the Messiah truly came. Says, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey." Not charging in on a stallion. No, humble, meek, riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey, a colt.

According to Matthew 21:7 and following, it's exactly how he entered Jerusalem. He came in riding on a donkey's colt, and it says, "Most of the crowd," they saw the sign, they recognized it, they "spread their cloaks on the road, others cut branches from the trees and spread them out on the road." That's why we celebrate Palm Sunday. "The crowds that went before him..

followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" They sound like great Christian people. Less than a week later, those same people who cheered his arrival, praised his coming in the name of the Lord, they now rejected him and called for his blood.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, wanted to release Jesus. He found nothing after trying him, he found nothing to condemn him for, no offense whatsoever. And even Pontius asked the, the crowd, "What shall I do with this Jesus who is called the Christ?" Chief priests, elders, they persuaded the crowd already to ask for Barabbas, the murderer, the insurrectionist, and to destroy Jesus instead.

So they all answered back to Pilate, no doubt to his great surprise, the crowd answered, "Let him be crucified!" And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw he's gaining nothing, rather that a riot is forming and beginning, which is anathema to the Roman governors, riots showed that they weren't ruling well, he took water, washed his hands before the crowd, saying,

"I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it to yourselves."
You know what the people said? "His blood be on us and on our children." "Cover us in his blood." Interesting when you think about the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a covering for sin and sinners.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Jerusalem, with no personal or religious interest in Jesus, tries to persuade the crowds of Jesus' innocence, and the people want nothing to do with the truth. They are willing and eager to commit the greatest travesty of justice ever committed in all of human history, condemnation of the only truly innocent man in all of history. Peter said, 1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin; neither was deceit found in his mouth." "He is," 1 John 2:1, "He is Jesus Christ, the righteous one." Pilate himself said, "I find no guilt in this man." The centurion who crucified Jesus and saw him die said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The popular rejection, points to the pervasive reality of what can only be explained by sin, the presence of sin, sin in our thinking, creating, creating such a tremendous inconsistency. Right judgment, on the one hand; unjust judgment,

on the other hand. Listen, Jesus wants his disciples to see that the rejection of the crowds that's coming, this is evidence of the pervasive reality of human depravity, of human sin, this is what creates the death in the world. We have a sin problem. When we can reverse course and collectively condemn an innocent man, and in Jesus' case, he is the only innocent man. He is the only righteous one, holy, perfect before God in every way. We have got a very, very deep sin problem. Something's got to be done about it. So, "Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." He'll be rejected.

Why think deeply about Jesus' rejection? We need to understand this rejection of Jesus reveals our deepest need, to be forgiven of our sins, which brings us to the crucifixion. "Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered," delivered, "into the hands of men." He'll be crucified. He'll be put to death in the most painful, shameful, humiliating, excruciating manner of execution ever devised.

Why think deeply about Jesus' crucifixion? Because the prediction of crucifixion points to the saving reality of the

atonement. Jesus died to save sinners. Isn't that good news? He died to save sinners like me, like you. He's the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. That lamb imagery refers to his atoning sacrifice, dying as a substitute for the sins of the people.

And his prediction, here, of his atoning death is not new. As far back as Isaiah, writing 700 years before Christ, Isaiah 53:4-6, these amazing words, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every single one of us—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

In the crucifixion, Jesus died to satisfy the just wrath of God for our sins. This is what's theologians call the penal substitutionary atonement. It's penal, in the sense that it's dealing with issues of justice, before a court of law, God's court. It's substitutionary, in the fact that Christ died in our

place. And it's atonement, in the fact that it's a covering, it's a shield from God's holy wrath.

Paul tells us how this happens in 2 Corinthians 5:21, that God made the one who did not know sin, that's Jesus, to be sin for us. What's that? His atoning sacrifice, his substitution. "So that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Not just declared innocent, but to be declared righteous. Peter put it this way, 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." I love that phrase, "in order that he might bring us to God."

Jesus has been restoring sons to fathers and daughters to fathers. Three times we've seen it in Luke's Gospel, Luke 7, Luke 8, Luke 9. Brings the son back to his mother, brings the daughter back to her parents, brings the, the boy in our text back to his father. And he wants to die, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, to restore us to our Father.