

In the second half of Luke 9, we witness the occasion when a desperate father brought his demonically tormented son to Jesus for healing. Afterward, Luke describes Jesus' interactions with a number of different men concerning the prospect of following Him. The comments Jesus made after each reveals the self-denial and dedication necessary if we are to follow Jesus without reservation.

Verses 23-36: After instructing the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ, Jesus emphasized the self-denial that would be required of those that followed Him. Eight days later Jesus took Peter, John and James up on a mountain to be with Him while He prayed. As He was praying, Jesus was transfigured in front of them while Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Him. When things had returned to normal, Jesus told the three disciples to keep secret what they had seen until after His resurrection (Matt. 17:9).

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

“And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill” – Apparently Jesus, Peter, John and James had spent the night up on the mountain. They are now coming down to rejoin the other nine disciples.

“much people met him” – The rest of the disciples presumably were waiting near the bottom of the mountain. It appears from the next verses that a man had recognized the disciples and had brought his son to them for healing. The interaction between the man, his son, and the disciples had caused a crowd to gather because Mark tells us that there were scribes arguing with the disciples (Mark 9:14, 16). It may be that the scribes were criticizing the disciples for not being able to satisfy this man's request.

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

This is a man who obviously loves his son, for the boy is his only child. He has brought his son to be healed of the ailment that he is about to describe and, as we will see in v. 40, he has already been disappointed by the disciples' inability to help. Now he desperately appeals to Jesus for help.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

“And, lo, a spirit taketh him” – The symptoms of the boy's condition sound like epileptic seizures that would come upon him without warning, but this man blames the boy's condition on a spirit. Instead of this merely being a case of a father misunderstanding the reason behind his son's suffering, there are multiple references to the source of the trouble being a “devil” (v. 42a, Matt. 17:18), and a “spirit” (v. 42b, Mark 9:17). Thus, the boy's affliction was not merely a medical issue.

“and he suddenly crieth out” – When the seizures hit the boy, he would cry out in surprise, pain or involuntary vocalizations.

“and it teareth [convulses] him that he foameth again” – The boy would go into convulsions and would foam at the mouth.

“and bruising him hardly [with difficulty] departeth from him” – These convulsions would often cause bodily harm such as bruising him as he impacted the ground or objects around him. In Mark's account, the father described how the unclean spirit would often endanger his son by causing him to fall into a body of water or into a fire during a seizure (Mark 9:22). Here, the father explained how difficult it was to stop these seizures when they occurred.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

Not finding Jesus, the man had asked the disciples to help his son. Jesus had given them the power and authority heal and cast out devils before sending them out to preach and heal (vs. 1-2). They should have been able to help this boy but they had been unsuccessful.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

“And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?” – These words were not directed at the father. Jesus likely uttered them under His breath as He recognized that it was the disciples' lack of faith that prevented them from being able to cast this spirit out of the boy. They had no excuse since they had already performed healing and had cast out evil spirits when Jesus had sent them out previously (vs. 1-9). It was their lack of faith that He found to be “perverse” (the Greek word means “distorted”).

“Bring thy son hither” – Jesus now directs the father to bring his son to Him.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

“And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare [convulsed] him” – As the father was bringing his son to Jesus, the son fell down as another seizure came upon him and he began convulsing on the ground. Luke blames the seizure on a demonic spirit, so perhaps the demonic spirit saw Jesus and knew that his time was short.

“And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child” – Mark gives us more detail: (Mark 9:25 “When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” The healing could have been in addition to the rebuking of the unclean spirit (assuming there was a medical element to the child's condition) or it could have been the result.

“and delivered him again to his father” – Jesus returns the boy to his happy father's care.

Verses 43-56: Everyone in the crowd (including the disciples) were amazed at the mighty power of God manifested in Jesus. Later, Jesus used a child to teach the disciples to be humble because they were arguing among themselves as to which of them would be greatest in Christ's kingdom. Recognizing that the time of His crucifixion was drawing near, Jesus began to journey to Jerusalem. As He did so, they passed through a Samaritan village that did not accept Him. The disciples thought they should call fire down from heaven as a punishment like Elijah but Jesus rebuked them for having the wrong attitude toward unbelievers.

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

During Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, He encounters a man who proclaims his willingness to follow Jesus wherever He goes. Matthew describes this man as a scribe (Matt. 8:19), which is unusual since most scribes that Jesus encountered were unfavorable toward Him. Scribes had originally been employed to make copies of the scriptures but by Jesus' day they were considered to be experts in the scripture due to their familiarity from the constant copying of scripture. It's possible that God used the constant exposure to the scripture to touch this man's heart, enabling him to recognize Jesus as the Christ.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

Jesus wanted this man to know what it meant to follow Him. The wild animals had places to call home, but Jesus was not at home in this world. Those who follow Jesus also cannot call this world their permanent home. Believers are pilgrims passing through this world until they reach Christ's kingdom, just as Abraham did (**Heb. 11:10** "*For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*"). We are not told how this man responded to Jesus' statement.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

"And he said unto another, Follow me" – Matthew describes this man as a disciple (Matt. 8:21). Presumably he was a man who had been following Jesus around but now Jesus was calling him into a more self-sacrificing relationship with Him (**Matt. 16:24** "*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*").

"But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father" – The expression "I must bury my father" was a common figure of speech meaning "Let me wait until I receive my inheritance." This man was not willing to deny himself since he wanted to wait until his father had died and he had acquired his inheritance before dedicating himself to following Jesus.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

Jesus reiterates His call to the man, stressing that it was the spiritually dead who worry about such things as burying the dead. Jesus was wanting this man to leave his old life behind and enter a higher calling: preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

Jesus reaches out to another man to follow Him, but this man is also having trouble denying himself. His desire to "bid farewell" to his family and friends implies that he wanted to be able to set his affairs in order, unlike Peter, James, John and Matthew who immediately left their former lives behind when Jesus called them to follow Him (Luke 5:3-11, 27-28).

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Plowing in that day utilized an ox or other large animal to pull the plow. In order to plow a straight line, it took the full attention of the plowman to keep the animal going straight. Looking back would inevitably lead to crooked furrows. Jesus is saying that anyone who is "looking back" is not focused on the kingdom of God. There are still things in this world that draw their attention away from the things of God.