

Majesty on Display

Luke 9:37-45

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God encourages believers in their walk with Him by giving them spiritual victories in their lives. But many Christians don't understand how easily these victories can be twisted into vices. When we forget where our power comes from, when we are tempted to take the credit for these victories, suddenly God-sufficiency becomes self-sufficiency, and the sin of pride takes over our lives. Jesus' disciples fell into this trap after a successful week of witnessing, and Jesus lovingly reminded them, and us, who ultimately has the power over the kingdom of darkness.

By the time the apostle Paul was preaching to his generation, the world around him had become inundated with largely superstitious views of a demonic world.

Ancient Egyptian views on spirituality had greatly influenced the Greek and Roman world with their obsession with demons. They had adopted the view that the human body was made up of 36 parts and a demon could enter and control any one of those parts.

As a result, in Rome—as in cultures around the world to this day—medicine was often nothing more than an attempt to get rid of a demon. The Medicine Man was part doctor-part exorcist.

In the first century, they were constantly creating incantations to rid some person

of a demon—the demon of paralysis; the demon of insanity. Demons were blamed in even much lesser issues like hearing loss or insomnia; they even believed demons caused indigestion.

Dating back to the days of Christ, they had developed the medical practice—or malpractice by today's medical standards—of drilling holes in people's skulls to let the demons out.

Years ago, I watched a documentary in which skulls dating back to the time of Christ were discovered that had holes drilled in them, no doubt many of them were victims of efforts to be rid of demons.

Of course, at the other end of the spectrum, you have the view that the devil and demons don't exist at all. It's all

make-believe; the devil and demons are the butt of jokes; they're something to laugh about.

Don't take any of it seriously; in fact, our world at large seems to have fun with the idea of demons.

So, you have the Demon Deacons of Wake Forest—poor deacons for getting their name attached to demons; you have got the Blue Demons of DePaul University and the Blue Devils of Duke University. Evidently, March Madness has invaded my study.

What's the harm in turning the devil and demons into cute little mascots who run around with horns and a pointed tail?

Either end of this spectrum is dangerous and erroneous and frankly, foolish.

The demonic world and their leader the devil are more than happy to see a generation or a culture play down the destructive, dangerous kingdom of darkness they represent.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis put it well when he wrote that there are two errors into which [we] can fall with regard to demons; one is to disbelieve in their existence and the other is to have an excessive interest in them, in other words, to look for them under every rock and around every corner. Lewis writes, the demons are equally pleased by both errors.

We're about to watch the Lord engage in an encounter with the demonic world; as you watch the ministry of the Lord, it's

obvious that He isn't obsessed or distracted by demons, but He is very aware of their danger.

And for the believer, He reminds us that there is no reason to fear them, yet every reason to be aware of the unseen battle.

The apostle Paul warned the believers living in Corinth to stay alert; he writes, "Don't be ignorant of Satan's methods (his designs, his schemes)" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

The believer cannot be possessed by a demon since we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of God now dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). We can't be possessed, but we can be pursued.

We no longer belong to the devil, as it were, but we can be buffeted by the devil.

He comes after us in one of four ways, first through temptation.

We are tempted by the joint forces of the world, the demonic world and our own sinful nature. When we sin, we always unlock the door from the inside—it might be the lust of the eyes, or the lust of the flesh or the pride of life (1 John 2:16).

This is what Peter meant when he wrote that Satan is like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

The word for devour means "to discredit, to ruin."

Temptation is the bait and Satan will use all kinds of bait; he's a skillful fisherman.

But ultimately, he doesn't care about the bait that made you bite; he doesn't care about the sin that entangles you; he just wants to ruin you; he wants to ruin your testimony and ruin your joy and ruin your trust in the Lord.

And it also means the Christian experience isn't one battle against sin and it's over. You've found that out, right? It's a constant warfare and it will not end until you see Jesus. Only then will you safely hang up your weapons and the armor of your warfare described for us in Ephesians 6.

The 17th century English Puritan John Flavel wrote these powerful and realistic words "To keep pure in thought; to have everything orderly in the heart—is constant work. The keeping of the heart is a work that is never done until life is ended. There is no time in the life of a Christian which will allow an intermission in this work."

Dave Furman, *Being There* (Crossway, 2016), p. 40

John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* also wrote a lesser-known book called *The Holy War*. I've referred to it before, but it's worth repeating because Bunyan was attempting to illustrate this particular issue.

In his book he personifies the life or soul of the Christian as a city having 5 gates: the ear gate, the eye gate, the nose gate, the feel gate, and the mouth gate.

Bunyan wrote that the enemy of Mansoul is simply named Sin, and he pictures Sin

coming daily to attack Mansoul at one of those gates.

And every day, it's a different gate—sometimes more than one gate at a time.

Sin will whisper through the ear gate some alluring message. Sin presents something wrong to the Eye Gate. Sin never let up.

In Bunyan's book, Mansoul can never be defeated by any of these outside attacks. The only way Sin gains a victory is if one of the senses opens their gate and lets him in.

Paul wrote along this same line when he commanded the Roman believers in ***Romans 6:13, stop presenting the members of your body to sin.***

Don't present your body to sin. Paul uses a military term that was used in the transfer of weapons. Paul is effectively writing, *Stop handing over your weapons to the enemy; the enemy will only use them against you. Stop opening the gate!*

Satan comes after the believer through **temptation**.

Secondly, he comes after us through **persecution**. This is his attempt to discourage the believer and silence their witness.

Third, he pursues the believer through **division**. He hates your family, he hates your church, he hates the gospel, he hates the fellowship of believers. So, he does everything he can to dissolve the unity we have with each other.

The demonic world pursues the believer through temptation, persecution, division, and finally through **deception**.

He constantly attempts to distort the truth and distract the Christian and deny some portion of the Scriptures and so deceive the believer.



How can Satan even use our spiritual victories in life to deceive us into sin?
What tools do we need to keep this deception at bay in our lives?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Let no one deceive you in any way” (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and to the Ephesians, “Let no one deceive you with empty words (meaningless, superficial, worldly advice)” (Ephesians 5:6).

So, these are four actions against believers: temptation, persecution, division, and deception.

For the unbeliever, there is a fifth action possible and that is possession.

We call it demonization. This is where the person is physically overtaken, and the demon essentially counterfeits the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the unbeliever’s body becomes their temple.

In reality, the demons are making a mocking offensive action directed toward Creator God. This is their attempt to insult

God, who created mankind in His own image and uniquely for His glory.

They love to distort and destroy the glory of God’s creation and they do it through this masquerading, indwelling possession.

The difference, of course, is obvious. When the Holy Spirit indwells someone, their lives are redeemed; when a demon indwells someone, their lives are only further ruined.

And that’s exactly what Jesus is about to change as He faces down a young man who is demon possessed.

That’s all introduction now to Luke chapter 9.

Let me invite your attention back to the ***Gospel by Luke; we’re in chapter 9 verse 37.***

On the next day, ...

Luke 9:37a

“The next day.” I don’t believe this is intended to be lost on us. Luke clearly wants us to know that something happened the day before, as if to say that what happened the day before was different than what was about to happen on this day.

Let’s read on; Luke continues here:

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.

Luke 9:37

The Lord had been up on what we call the Mount of Transfiguration.

Just the day before, Jesus had pulled back the veil of humanity to reveal His glorious deity. In our last study, we watched as the Lord's body emitted such brilliant light that his clothing turned blazing, brilliant white and His face lit up like the sun at noonday.

It was a brilliant display of His majesty.

Peter, James and John were up there too, and they saw it happen. In fact, Peter will later write in **2 Peter 1:16**: ***“we were eyewitnesses of His majesty; (we were with Him on that mountain).”***

What a mountaintop experience that was. It was a glorious demonstration of the kingdom of light.

But that was yesterday.

They can't live up on the mountain forever, they must come down that mountain. What a change of perspective they will experience in the next 24 hours.



If you have experienced a “mountain-top” experience, how long did it take when you returned to normal life for that feeling to diminish? How can we more consistently keep our passions ignited for God's use?

It reminds me that God never intended a mountain-top experience to eliminate the battles of life down below.

If it happened this way with the Lord, why do we think it'll be any different for us today?

Yesterday it was a demonstration of the kingdom of light; *today* it's a demonstration of the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus and his three disciples—Peter, James and John—come down off this mountain, where the other nine disciples are currently involved in a heated argument with religious leaders, according to Mark's Gospel account. The crowd is waiting for them and frankly, it's pandemonium, it's “confusion and chaos.”

Adapted from David E. Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 402

Luke writes in verse 38:

And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to 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 shatters him, and will hardly leave him. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”

Luke 9:38-40

Before we go further, I want that last phrase to arrest your attention. “***I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.***”

What do you mean, they could not? Of course they could!

Not more than a week ago, they had been empowered by the Lord and sent out in teams of two; they had gone out and performed miracles and cast out demons and preached with power the gospel of Christ.

But now, nine of them combined can't cast out one demon.

They could not do it. And the problem was they thought they could do it because they had done it.

Matthew's account said they lacked faith or trust in the Lord and Mark's Gospel account pointed out that they didn't even pray about it.

I don't need to ask the Lord for help; I've done this before.

There's no need to depend on the Lord in faith; there's no need to ask the Lord for power through prayer.

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume 1* (Crossway, 1998), p. 358

Let me just show you my resume!

So, in the space of one week, they experience a power outage; they moved from power to powerlessness.

I believe the Lord is teaching them a lesson here without saying a word: this is what can happen when you drift from

sheer dependency to self-sufficiency, and it can happen in less than one week

Now verse 41:

Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?”

Luke 9:41a

This phrase echoes the passage in **Deuteronomy chapter 32**, which refers to Israel's unfaithfulness and disobedience in the wilderness.

Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 1 (Zondervan, 2002), p. 406

Jesus applies that text here to the unbelief of the nation Israel in her own rejection of Himself as Messiah. He knows it won't be long before He will be crucified; He sees the clouds of demonic influence swirling overhead; He sees the infiltration of the kingdom of darkness displaying the tentacles of its power even in this demonized young man.

With that, the Lord asks them to bring this young man to him.

Verse 42 tells us that:

While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

Luke 9:42-43

Jesus is clearly different than His disciples. Jesus has spiritual power they have never seen before, and they correctly attribute it to the majesty and power of God.

In fact, the word Luke uses here for **majesty** is the same word used by Peter, who wrote that he was an eyewitness to the *majesty* of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Jesus is demonstrating His divine majesty. He did it up on the mountain in brilliant light and He's doing it here in the valley over the kingdom of darkness.

I want to point out: the majesty of God might be more obvious to us on the mountain top, but it is still just as majestic and powerful and operational down in the chaos and confusion of our world today.

Let me also note that the majesty of Christ in delivering someone bound by the kingdom of darkness might not be as dramatic as this demonized young man who was delivered. But in the heavenly realm, where they see the big picture, every salvation—every redeemed life—is just as victorious over the kingdom of darkness as any other.



What are some ways that might have seemed ordinary or mundane at the time, but were great spiritual victories over darkness? If you have an “ordinary” testimony, how does this truth encourage you today?

You might think your testimony is bland and too ordinary and too common place. Oh no, your salvation was the demonstration of the power of Christ over the kingdom of darkness!

In fact, when you got saved, the Bible says a celebration began in Heaven, in the presence of the angels (Luke 15:10). The apostle John in the Book of Revelation couldn't count the number of angels but estimated their number at over 100 million (Revelation 5:11).

Imagine 100 million angels at some heavenly celebration of your salvation.

You thought it was wonderful when you had that surprise birthday party and 20 or 30 people sang happy birthday to you when you walked in the door.

You can't imagine the celebration at the moment of your spiritual birth, but it wasn't ordinary; it was one more victory over the kingdom of death and darkness.

Well, everybody here is marveling and awestruck at the power and majesty of Christ. We're told here in verse 43:

But while they were all marveling at everything he 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.”

Luke 9:43b-44

The Son of Man is a favorite title for the Messiah that emphasized His identity with humanity. He was the Son of God, but He’s also the Son of Man.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 244

Verse 45:

But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

Luke 9:45

Why would Jesus tell them something He knew they wouldn’t grasp?

One author explained that Jesus wanted to plant a seed in their memories, so that eventually—when He was condemned by the nation’s leaders; and then tried in courts by Roman rulers who were morally bankrupt; when He suffered the pain and shame of crucifixion and then lay cold in a borrowed tomb—they would realize that none of it had been a mistake. It was not a miscalculation.

Swindoll, p. 245

Everything had gone perfectly, according to plan.

But don’t forget that at this moment, I love that Luke emphasizes this point here at this moment: “**While they were marveling over the majesty of God,**” the Lord informs His disciples that their plans of riding this moment into the glory of the kingdom were not His plans.

“**While they were marveling,**” Jesus reminds them of the divine script, and it was different than theirs.

And to this day, our schedule doesn’t match up with the plan God is about to unfold.

Our agenda and our calendar and our expectations are often directly incompatible with the agenda of God.

And we hear God effectively say: “No, not that.” “No, not now.” “No, not ever.” “No; there’s something different, something deeper, something hidden from your perception.” “No, I’ve planned something better for you.”



Describe a time when you received a “no” from God. How did you cope with that discouragement? Did God ever reveal to you His greater plans for you? If not, can you still find contentment, even though God didn’t explain Himself to you?

I read recently a few weeks ago about a man who was accepted and appointed, along with his wife, as missionaries to the continent of Africa. They quickly raised their support and headed off to the field, only to discover that the wife was susceptible to disease and came down rather quickly with a serious illness.

For her health's sake, they had to leave their first term of missionary service and return to the states. In order to make a living, this young man joined his father in his dentistry practice.

A little while later, he joined his father's early attempts in pasteurizing grape juice in order to keep it from fermenting, so that their church could use it during communion services.

Pasteurizing grape juice had not been attempted before, and they had modest success at their experiment.

They offered it to other churches in the community as well, and word spread. It wasn't long before the demand for their

grape juice exceeded anything they had planned, and they stopped their dental practice entirely.

That young man who had longed to be a missionary—who along with his wife had their dreams and expectations changed—never served the Lord overseas. His name was Charles Welch, as in Welch's Grape Juice Company.

He would go on to give hundreds of thousands of dollars—millions in today's economy—to the work of Christ on the mission fields around the world.

Often, it takes a lifetime to see it come together; maybe you don't see it now, you can't understand it now, but you will see later that God did not miscalculate. There are no typos in His script for our lives; it was all according to plan.

One day we will discover this amazing truth from the perspective of Heaven: in our lives, in ways we never saw or imagined, God's majesty had been on display all along the way.

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