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LUKE 9:1-50

Chapter 9 of **Luke** is so full of sound teaching and so full of familiar stories from the life of Jesus... We're told in this chapter

- how the Lord Jesus **sent out the twelve apostles** with specific instructions how to conduct themselves...
- how the Lord Jesus took five loaves and two fish and multiplied this little lunch to **feed 5,000 people** with twelve baskets left over...
- how Jesus **cast out an unclean spirit** from a little boy...
- how the Lord Jesus told His disciples that **He would be betrayed** and delivered into the hands of men...

And of course, we cannot begin to cover **all** these passages. So, I want us to key in on a very few...

Luke 9:18-22...

The first part of this chapter tells us that the disciples had been sent out by Jesus to preach the gospel. **Verse 6** tells us they had been going about among the villages, preaching the gospel and healing the people.

The first part of this chapter goes on to tell us that the disciples came back to Jesus and reported to Him all that they had done and that He took them away privately to a city called Bethsaida, but the multitudes followed them there and it was there that He began to teach them and heal them and it was there that He fed them with the fives loaves and two fish.

Verse 18 tells us that it was after this that Jesus and His disciples had gone off by themselves to pray. And it was on this occasion that Jesus chose to ask a very important question... **"Who do folks say that I am?"**

That's a very interesting question. Have you ever thought about it?

I mean, who **did** folks say that Jesus was? He had **taught** them. He had **healed** them. He had **fed** them. He had **shown compassion** for them. Not only that, but He had given power to His disciples to do the same thing. And here He was asking the disciples who folks said He was.

Why do you think He asked this? Do you think Jesus didn't **know** what folks were thinking and saying about Him? Oh, He knew!

But, I believe He wanted the disciples to come face to face with reality. I believe He wanted to make certain the **disciples** really knew what other people were saying about Him.

Look at what they said...

"Well, Jesus, some are saying You're John the Baptist. Some are saying You're Elijah. Some are saying You're one of the prophets of old."

Matthew says they specifically stated that folks were saying Jesus might be Jeremiah.

What does this tell you and me? It tells us that no one recognized who Jesus **really** was!

You know, popularity is a very fickle thing. And I believe we've seen this fleshed out in the last several years in our president.

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Remember the approval rating President Bush had right after 9/11? It was in the high 80's if I remember correctly. But what is it now? Well, if we believe the liberal media polls it's less than 50%. And I don't find that hard to believe. I mean, with all the bad press he's received, I'm surprised it's that high.

And the Lord Jesus wasn't nearly as much concerned with getting His disciples to see who His **critics** said He was as He was getting them to see who His **followers** said He was...and ultimately to get them to see and acknowledge who **they themselves** said He was.

And the bottom line is that by their answers they revealed that even the people who followed Jesus didn't believe He was their Savior...they thought He was merely a **good man** like John the Baptist and like Elijah and like Jeremiah.

I want to tell you...you can believe Jesus was a **prophet** and a **good man** and a **good teacher** and a **good miracle worker** and a **good healer** and be as lost as you can be.

You can even believe Jesus was a man "**sent from God**" and be lost. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and said, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

And Jesus went on to explain to Nicodemus that he must be born again or he would not see the kingdom of God.

Verse 20: "But who do you say that I am?"

The disciples knew the answers they had just given Jesus were not adequate. They knew He was more than John the Baptist had ever been, and He was more than Elijah had ever been, and He was more than Jeremiah or any of the other prophets had ever been.

And **Matthew** tells us that Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The word "Christ" is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament word "Messiah." The Messiah of the Old Testament was recognized as fully divine...the God incarnate...

Some folks absolutely refuse to believe that Jesus is God. There are folks who will say, "Well, Jesus never claimed to be God." Oh, but He did! On more than one occasion...but since we're looking at **this** passage of Scripture let me tell you how **Matthew** says Jesus responded to Peter.

When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said, "**Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**" Jesus didn't say, "Oh, Peter, you've overstated who I am."

Listen, I believe the most important question before **you and me** today is this... "**Who do you think Jesus is?**" In fact, that's the question that divides the cult members from the true Christians. When a Mormon comes to your door, the belief that should differentiate your relationship with God from theirs is belief about who Jesus is!

The Bible doesn't say, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the great teacher will be saved" or "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the great healer or the great miracle worker or even upon the man sent from God..." It says, "**Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

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Verse 21 says that Jesus told His disciples not to tell anyone what had just been said. Why? Because Jesus knew that if some of the things He said became public it would bring about the attempt by those who opposed Him to put Him to death much sooner than it happened.

Jesus came to die, but, Jesus came to die in His **own time** and on His **own terms!** See what He says in **verse 22?** Jesus is saying, “Yes, I’m going to have to suffer and die, but it won’t be on **their** timetable...it will be on **Mine.**”

Now, I want to ask you this before we leave this passage. **Who do we say that Jesus is?**

Do we show others by our life and our lips that Jesus is

- A good man?
- A good teacher?
- A good healer?
- A good miracle worker?
- A man sent from God?

Or, do we show others by our life and our lips that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God...the Messiah...the One who came to save us from our sins...the King of kings and the Lord or lords? Can anyone look at us at **work** or at **school** or at the **grocery store** or in our **family gatherings** and detect that He is the Lord of our life?

I want to tell you...**verse 21** doesn’t apply to us today. We have been commissioned by the Lord to tell others about Him! And it’s more than a verbal expression...it’s a commitment of **our heart** and of **our life** and of **our actions.**

Billy Graham made a frightening statement recently that 75% of all church members in America have never been saved.

Now, this includes Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Greek Orthodox. But, still that’s a **huge** percentage.

What does this mean? It simply means that with their mouth they have confessed that Jesus is Lord, but they have never with their heart surrendered their will to Him.

This past week we happened to see a discussion between Jerry Falwell and Jessie Jackson. The topics were abortion and same sex marriage. Dr. Falwell said, “Why Jerry, I heard you preach one of the best sermons I’ve ever heard on abortion one time.” And Jessie Jackson said, “Well, yes, but my views have expanded...I don’t really believe like I used to...”

Salvation is a surrendering of **your** heart to **His** heart and we’ll see that more in the next passage of Scripture.

Verses 23-26...

In **verses 18-22** we saw **who Jesus is** and **why Jesus came**, and in these verses we see **what Jesus expects.**

Expectations are important. People get in bad arguments because one person expects one thing and the other person didn’t know what was expected of him and doesn’t perform up to the expectations of the other person. This happens in a marriage, in business, even in church.

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But, I want to tell you this...Jesus left absolutely no doubt what was expected of those who would be His believers.

This is not the way to **be** saved. This is the way to walk **after** we are saved. I mean, you don't go out and witness to a person and say, "Now in order to be saved you have to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him."

That's not the way of salvation. A person is saved on the basis of repenting from their sin and placing their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. **That's** sonship. **That's** salvation...

But **this is discipleship**. Jesus is saying, "I want you to know, I have expectations of those of you who call yourselves 'Christian.' I have expectations for those of you who have placed your trust in Me."

We need to remember the Jews had been taught that the way to reach God was to observe a long list of rules and regulations and to observe a long list of rituals...most of which had been dreamed up in the minds of men.

But, Jesus came and taught that we must come as little children and simply trust Him and His blood to take away our sin and make us right before God... and after **that** there are certain expectations of us.

And I believe we see four things in **verse 23**...

The first thing is that you must **make up your mind**.

KJV: "...if any man **will** come after me..."

And this word for "**will**" is a forceful word. It means "**to determine**," or "**to make a determination**." You make up your mind to follow Jesus.

We live in a world of indecision. I've been amazed at the percentage of folks in these recent political polls who say they are "undecided voters." How in the world can you be undecided in this race? I mean, you either support President Bush and the things he stands for or you don't! You either support John Kerry and the things he stands for or you don't!

But, Jesus said a believer doesn't need to be an "undecided." **Listen, it's entirely possible to be saved yet be a failure in your spiritual life.** And the reason a lot of people fail in their spiritual life is that they never take the first step of making up their mind that **more than anything else in life they want to be all that God wants them to be in Christ Jesus!**

The next thing Jesus says that a believer needs to do is to **deny himself**. Jesus said, "**If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself...**"

What does it mean to deny yourself? Well, let's establish what it is **not**.

This "self" to which Jesus refers is not one's **personal identity** as a distinct individual. God created you. God created me. And He knows you and me by name. He has every believer's name recorded in heaven.

John MacArthur: "The 'self' of which Jesus is speaking is the natural, sinful, rebellious, unredeemed self that is at the center of every fallen person and that can even reclaim temporary control over a Christian."

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You know, I don't get into much trouble until I allow **self** to rule in my life. As long as I **deny** self I'm okay...but the moment I **don't** deny self that's when my tongue says bad things...my mind thinks bad things...my hands do bad things...my feet go bad places. Do you see what I mean?

A third thing Jesus says in this verse is that I must **take up my cross**. Now, this doesn't mean I take my pretty little cross out of my jewelry case and put it around my neck.

Some people say their "cross" is a disease they have...or a wayward child or a bad marriage.

See, being determined to come after Jesus and being determined to deny oneself and being determined to take up our cross are **voluntary** things. No one is going to **force** you to make up your mind to follow Jesus. And no one is going to **force** you to deny yourself. And no one is going to **force** you to take up the cross.

You don't get up one morning and say, "Oh, I believe I'll volunteer to have diabetes or cancer or heart trouble..." or "Oh, I believe I'll volunteer to have my child go astray..." or "Oh, I believe I'll volunteer to have my marriage fall apart..." No! That's not cross bearing!

Cross bearing is voluntarily saying, "No matter what it costs me, I willingly identify myself with the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a picture of total surrender! And did you notice that we're to do this **daily**? I think this means that every single day we determine to surrender to Jesus! Why? Because even though we may have taken our cross up today, the temptation will be to not take it up tomorrow!

I read this past week (Ivor Powell):

Believing on the Cross leads to salvation.

Carrying the Cross brings humility.

Dying upon the Cross produces sanctification, for then we are like Christ.

Stage one secures entrance into God's school.

Stage two indicates we are proceeding with our lessons.

Stage three is graduation.

Unless, with Paul, we can say, "I die daily," we are still in kindergarten."

The last thing Jesus tells us in this verse is that **we must follow Him**. Now, this isn't rocket science. It simply means, "Just come in the same direction I'm walking. Accompany Me. Stay with Me. Don't run ahead of Me. Go in the way that I'm going. Allow Me to lead you, dear child."

We've seen **who Jesus is** and **why Jesus came** and **what Jesus expects**. Jesus has given us **four things** to do. And He expects us to do all four things. He doesn't expect us to do three out of four...He expects us to do all four.

And then, He gives us in **verse 24 how Jesus expects us to win**. "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Jim Elliott said: "He is no fool who loses what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

See, in a way we may not understand, the Christian wins by losing. The Christian doesn't win by being healthy and wealthy like so many of the TV preachers would tell us! The Christian wins by losing. **What do we have to lose? Whatever God tells us to lose.**

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Listen, sometimes the Christian must simply be willing to lose **acceptance** by his or her peers at work. I mean, simply taking a godly stand on shady issues...even being willing to bow before God in a restaurant and thank Him for the food He's provided.

Many times those of us who are in families where we as believers are in the minority must be willing to risk the criticism of those we love the dearest.

What are we asked to lose? It may be our **wealth**. It may be our **reputation**. It may be our **health**. It may be our **life**.

The story is told of a plantation slave in the old South who was always happy and singing. No matter what happened to him, his joy was always abounding.

One day his master asked him, "What have you got that makes you so happy?"

The slave replied, "I love the Lord Jesus Christ. He has forgiven my sin and put a song in my heart."

"Well, how do I get what you have?" his master asked.

"You go and put on your best Sunday suit and you come down here and work in the mud with us and you can have it," came the reply.

"I would never do that," the owner retorted indignantly as he rode off in a huff.

Some weeks later, the master asked the same question and was given the same answer. A few weeks later he came a third time and said, "Now be straight with me. What do I have to do to have what you have?"

"Just what I've told you the other times," came the answer.

In desperation, the owner said, "All right, I'll do it."

"Now you don't have to do it," the slave said. "You only had to be willing."

Now this isn't theologically correct as it regards salvation, but it is pretty correct as it regards sanctification!

It's not that the believer has to be a martyr...but that he is willing to be if faithfulness to Christ demands it.

And Jesus reinforces this in **verse 25** and **26**...

Some interpret this to mean a lost person who gains the whole world and loses his own soul. Some interpret this to mean a saved person who gains the whole world and loses his rewards. I believe it can be taken both ways.

See, Jesus is talking to His disciples, but **Mark** tells us the **multitude** had joined them...so not only believers but also unbelievers were listening!

If this applies to unbelievers it's easy to understand, isn't it? I mean, Jesus is simply saying gaining the whole world in this life doesn't compare to losing your soul in the next life.

But, let's look at the other side of this two-edged sword...let's apply this to the believer for a moment...

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This world measures success and gain by the kind of **home** you live in and the brand of **clothes** you wear and the amount of **money** in your account and the make of your **car** and the kinds of **trips** you take...

“Get all you can and can all you get, and sit on the can.” Jesus said, **“Don’t get caught up in those things...you’ll lose if you do.”**

Let me read to you how these verses read in **“The Message.”**

“Then He told them what they could expect for themselves. ‘Anyone who intends to come with Me has to let Me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat – I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow Me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, My way, to finding yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose *you*, the real *you*? If any of you is embarrassed with Me and the way I’m leading you, know that the Son of Man will be far more embarrassed with you when He arrives in all His splendor in company with the Father and the holy angels.’”

One day Jesus will come back and each one of us will stand before Him and He will either say, “Well done. You came after Me. You denied self. You put My will above yours. You took up your cross daily and you truly followed Me. I have rewards for you, dear child of God!”

Or He will say to the believer who lived for self, “I would like to have been able to reward you for faithful discipleship, but you refused to determine to really come and to really put My will above yours and to really take up your cross daily and to really follow Me! The rewards that could have been yours are withheld.”

What will He say to you? What will He say to me?

The Pastor says:

“You see, when you think about what Jesus said about winning, it really isn’t far fetched.

Who is He? **He’s the Christ of God.**

Why did He come? **He came to die and to be raised again.**

What does He expect? **He expects me to make up my mind, to deny myself, take up the cross, and follow Him.**

How can I win? **By losing. By surrendering. By recognizing that nothing can ever be mine. It’s His.**

And Jesus said if you do that, you’ll find an amazing thing. That in the midst of losing, you end up winning.

Peter confessed: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Mouth confession **can** represent heart confession, but it sometimes doesn’t.

So I want to ask you...

Have you ever examined your heart to see if it truly confesses
Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God?

Listen, if our lives don’t show a heart change, something is wrong! And we will never be able to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him until the **confession of our heart** matches the confession of our mouth!

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Verses 28-36 tell us the familiar story of the Mount of Transfiguration. How I wish we had the time to really get into this...Jesus is revealed in a different form to Peter, James and John. And with Him appeared Moses and Elijah.

Moses represented **the Law**.

Elijah represented **the Prophets**.

Jesus represented **the Gospel**.

The Law and the Prophets were fulfilled in God's Son. **"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased."**

Our prayer should be and the greatest desire of our hearts should be that God would look at us one day and say, **"Oh, he's My child! And I am so pleased with him!"**