

## Luke 32 – Failings

We are an imperfect people. Though God made us in His image, that image was corrupted by our first parents, who rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, thus plunging the rest of us into blinding sin, and the world into corruption. That we fail because of our sin is clear in Scripture. It says in Romans 3:10 “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Romans 3:23 says “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” We have failed God in our ability to live perfect lives. God in His love sent Jesus Christ to redeem us from the curse of sin, so that we can be free from sin. Romans 6:22 says “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” The life of a Christian is one that is free from the bondage and chains of sin. But this does not mean we are perfect or everything that we should be. We are to continue to grow in our knowledge of God and His Word, and continue to become more like Jesus. We will see some examples this morning of Jesus’ disciples and their failings, and how Jesus tried to help them understand what His expectations are.

We have been going through the book of the Gospel of Luke. Last week we talked about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, which is where Jesus displayed the glory of God in His person. He took only three of his twelve disciples with him, and appeared in His glory, with Moses and Elijah. This allowed Peter, James, and John to have a new perspective on Jesus, one that they would never forget, as is evidenced by what Peter says in the first chapter of his second epistle. With this new perspective, the Teacher and his three students descend the mountain and encounter something unexpected. Luke 9:37-43 says:

“And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. 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 I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 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 they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.”

As Jesus comes down from the mountain, called here a hill, the Bible says that many people met him. This story is also found in Matthew 17 and Mark 9. Mark says that there were some scribes, or Torah teachers, who were disputing with the disciples in the middle of this multitude. The people run to Jesus and salute Him, but Jesus is singly focused on His disciples. He confronts these scribes and asks them, “What question ye with them?” Throughout the gospels, we see the scribes confronting Jesus, not to learn, but to accuse and trip Him up. Matthew 9:3 says that “certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.” Luke 22 reveals that it is the scribes and Pharisees who plot to and eventually put Jesus to death. In Matthew 15:1, the scribes come to Jesus and ask him why the disciples were transgressing the Jewish traditions by not washing their hands the way the rabbis had prescribed. Jesus answers them: “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” Jesus is fiercely protective of his disciples.

In answer to his question, a man comes forth to tell what has been happening. This man is a father, and his heart is broken because of what is happening to his son. Being a father myself, I can relate with how hopeless this man feels that he cannot help his son. He says, “Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. 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 I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.” The problem, this father reveals, is that his son is demon possessed. This is a phenomenon that was quite frequent in the Gospels. We saw instances of it in Luke 4:35; Luke 4:41; Luke 6:18; Luke 7:21; Luke 8:2; and most famously Luke 8:26 and following.

In the case of the demon possessed man in Luke 8, the demon had tormented this man. He ran around naked in the tombs, cutting himself and screaming. No one could bind him or tame him. Often the idea of someone being demon possessed has been treated as fantasy rather than reality, especially in American culture and media. The fact is that while Americans are unaccustomed to see people who are demon possessed, this is prevalent in other cultures, especially ones that practice voodoo and witchcraft. It is not something fantastic, but real. The Bible does not explain in any detail how demon possession happens. Luke 11 talks more about this, and when we get to it, we will speak in more detail, but for now let me say that fallen angels, often called “unclean spirits” are able to control people in such a way that they cannot account for their own actions. Such is the case with this little boy. Luke says that the boy makes him cry out, foam, and bruise himself. Matthew says that the demon tried to cast the boy into the fire or into water, and calls him “sore vexed.” Mark says that the boy gnashed with his teeth and was pining away. Clearly, this boy needed help.

The problem is that when this father went to Jesus’ disciples, they tried to cast out the demon, and could not. In all three Gospels that contain this story, Jesus’ response is the same: “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?” Why and to whom does He offer this response? Perhaps it is to the father of this boy. This doesn’t seem likely, since this man no doubt did nothing to deserve this calamity. Perhaps He is speaking to His disciples. This is possible, though unlikely. Later in this same story He does tell them, as we shall see, that the reason that they could not cast out the demon was because of their unbelief. However, Jesus also says, “perverse,” which, if He was using it on His disciples, would be the first and only time.

Perhaps He was speaking to the scribes. They claimed to be spiritual leaders and in touch with God. Yet instead of helping this boy themselves, they merely disputed with the disciples. In Matthew 23:13, Jesus says to the scribes “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.” They could not help, but did not want to help those who were trying to help. I meet many Christians who are this way. They are so convinced of the right way, through their own knowledge and Bible reading, but because of their pride they club people over their head with this knowledge, instead of helping people to grow in their spirituality. They do not apply the knowledge they have in any helpful way, only use it to tell others where they are wrong. This is wickedness, and is condemned constantly throughout the Bible. God has revealed Himself, not so that we can establish a pecking order, but so that we might be a blessing and help to others. This the scribes were not doing.

I think most likely, Jesus is speaking of the entire Jewish nation. You notice in Old Testament times that there are almost no instances of demon possession. You hear of no demon-possessed people in good king David’s time. This was a time of real spiritual darkness. The pagan Greek culture had amalgamated with the equally pagan and polytheistic Roman culture, to influence many Jews in a way that left a spiritual void, thus inviting unclean spirits to harass and inhabit those in the country. If scholars are right and this was Mt. Hermon, it was in a predominantly Gentile area. The people here had been void of the truth, and now needed help. They had rejected God, but needed Him desperately. Such is the case many times. Our church is a gathering of people who care about one another and meet one another’s needs. We are different, but bound together in our faith. Often, people come to the church during the week looking for help. When I ask them if they are part of a church, they usually answer, “No.” Church is not good enough for them to attend, but it is enough for them when they need help. This is our culture, but I fear it is every culture.

Jesus’ rebuke does not mean that He will not help, but that He wants the people to take notice of why He is doing what He is doing. His miracles serve to showcase His message and His person, not simply to show that He can do neat things. He says, “Bring thy son hither.” The father goes to get the child, but the demon inside of him knows what is about to happen and starts to fight. He does not speak to Jesus, as the Legion of demons did in Luke 8, but he throws the boy onto the ground. Luke says that he “tare him.” This is the idea of ripping, and mean that he started to convulse and shake on the ground. Mark says that the boy “wallowed foaming.” The devil wants to try to fight to keep his habitation in this boy. This is consistent with the character of Satan and his

evil spirits. Revelation 12:12 says “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” The forces of evil, though defeated foes, are rebellious unto the end.

Jesus, says Mark, turns to the boy’s father and asks him how long this boy has been like this. The father replies that ever since the boy was young he has suffered so. It could be that this boy is a teenager who has been suffering for many years. The father then says, “but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.” All hope but this is lost. Only Jesus can do anything about his son, and he now begs for help. Mark says that Jesus answers, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Jesus states that He is able to heal this child, but that the reason He will is so that the man will be drawn closer to God. God is not interested in our existence, but our fellowship with Him. He wants us to learn of Him and be more like Him. This man is no exception. This man desires this, but struggles with his spiritual life. He says to Jesus: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Mark says that he says these words through tears. He doesn’t have much faith, but he has a little, and asks Jesus to make up the difference in what he lacks.

Mark also says that Jesus can see the multitude running toward where they are, and so performs His miracle. Jesus rebukes the devil and commands him to come out of him, using the words, “Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” Upon this, the boy convulses again, and is still. Many people think that this boy is dead, but Jesus raises him from the ground and he is well. Luke says that Jesus delivers the child to his father. You can imagine how happy this father is at having his son well. This is the first time that he has been able to have a normal child in years. I would like to think that in Jesus’ healing, this healing for this boy was complete. The burn marks are all erased, and any bruises gone. The gospel writers contrast Jesus and Satan. Satan is interested in destroying life; Jesus is the life-giver. Satan wants to tear down; Jesus wants to build up. Satan wants to ruin relationships; Jesus wants to restore them. Satan wants to harm; Jesus wants to heal.

People sometimes have a hard time with the fact that God allows Satan to exist. Why, they say, would God create a being that He knew would rebel and throw the world into such turmoil? Why would God give a being such power that he could use to overthrow what God wanted? There are no real easy answers why God allows Satan to exist and continue to work, nor why there is so much suffering in the world, but one of them is this: The hatred and evil of Satan is a backdrop to display the love and goodness of God. Just as when a jeweler wants to display a diamond, he puts it on a dark cloth, so the darkness of our world serves to show just how good God is. We need a point of reference, and many times for us, seeing the wickedness around us displays how kind and benevolent God is. I would like to try to explore this more in the future.

The people wonder at the power of God in the works of Jesus, but the disciples are puzzled. They are glad for this father and boy, but they have questions. They start to ask them in the next few verses of our text, found in Luke 9:43-45: “But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, ‘Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.’ But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.” This text is not the clearest as to how the people and the disciples wondered, but the other gospel writers tell us that the disciples asked: “Why could not we cast him out?” They can see where Jesus had been successful, but were not sure why they had not been. Jesus had given them power to cast out demons at the beginning of this chapter, but now they were unsuccessful. Why was that?

Jesus answers in Matthew this way: “Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” Jesus tells the disciples that there are some acts that need more faith. What is faith? Faith is simply believing God and exercising that belief in some way. In this case, the disciples needed to fast and pray, expecting God to do the work, instead of by their own hands. They had asked, “Why could we not cast them out?” The answer is that

they had not relied on God's power, but their own. We see a humorous example of this in Acts 19. Jesus says that had they had faith, the task would have been simple.

But Luke does not dwell on the failings of the disciples in that respect. He doesn't even give this exchange, but moves on to what Jesus has to say next. He had said in verse 22 of this same chapter that He was eventually going to die. He said: "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." Now here in the next verses we will look at He says the same thing. Luke 9:43-45 says "But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 'Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.' But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying." Jesus explains to them once again that His purpose on the Earth is not to establish his physical kingdom, but to die on the cross at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

Jesus tells them "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." This is an idiom that means, "Remember what I am saying. Try to understand them." The disciples, like most of the people in Galilee at the time, had too narrow of a focus on the Messiah as someone who was a physical conqueror, not a spiritual one. Jesus is trying to emphasize to His disciples that His task is to die for sins. But Luke tells us that the meaning of what Jesus is saying is hidden. The disciples just do not understand. They will need a divine revelation before they can apprehend all that takes place during the death of Christ.

This focus on the physical kingdom leads the disciples to start a fight amongst one another. Luke 9:46-48 says "Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." The disciples are quietly debating one another as to who will be the greatest when Jesus sets up His kingdom. By what criteria they are trying to ascertain this is not certain. Perhaps Peter thinks that he should be the most important since he was most likely the oldest. Perhaps Andrew thinks that he should be the most important because he, according to John 1, was one of Jesus' first disciples. Perhaps James and John thought that they should be important in the kingdom, since their mother had asked Jesus for these special allowances. Perhaps Judas thought he should since he was the treasurer.

The Roman world was full of political intrigue. The current Roman Emperor, Tiberius, had risen to power because his mother had divorced his father and married Caesar Augustus, making him a step-son. He entered politics and then the army, gaining notoriety among his soldiers and countrymen. He married a daughter of one of Augustus' closest friends. When it became advantageous for him, he divorced that woman and married Augustus' daughter. Augustus himself had risen to power by allying his name with the beloved Julius Caesar and defeating Mark Antony. This was the way of the world, but not of the followers of Jesus. They were to exhibit a new model for God's kingdom. We have said this before, but God's physical kingdom had spiritual requirements, not only to enter, but to be a ruler in it. The Bible does not give specific names of those who will rule with Christ in glory, but here Jesus gives the requirements, if one is to expect such an honor someday.

Luke says that Jesus can perceive their thoughts. He perhaps cannot hear them physically, but He can know what they are thinking and saying. Instead of simply telling His disciples not to think that way, Jesus follows typical rabbi fashion and illustrates it. He takes a child and sets it by Him. Then, using this lesson, tells them: "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." Jesus sets the standard of God's kingdom very high by setting it low. In America, all people are essentially seen as equal. We all get one vote at election time and we are all simple humans. In the ancient world, however, you were always looking for the pecking order. If you met someone in the street, you would look for signs of whether they were above you or below you. If the man was wealthier than you, you deferred to him and revered him. Occupation, such as the priesthood, was also seen as a significant status symbol. Another was age.

Children, though loved and cared for, had little to no social standing. Galatians even says that even though the child may be a prince, he is subject to those older slaves who are in charge of his education. Jesus, as a rabbi, was highly respected, especially by his disciples. Jesus takes the child and says that the disciples should treat this child, or any child, the same as they treat Him. We sing a song called “Jesus Loves the Little Children” and this certainly is true, but the idea here is not simply that Jesus loves children, but that there should be no pecking order. There should be no vying for position; only deferment. Jesus’ disciple Peter gets this, because in his epistle he says: “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Humility is key in God’s kingdom, and it is a lesson the disciples need to learn. However, they are stuck in their unbelief because they refuse to see Jesus’ mission as one of salvation, not conquering.

Too many people join a church because they want to “move up the ranks.” They either want to establish themselves as a great teacher, a great giver, or a hardworking servant. They want to be seen by all so that they might feel important. Jesus has much to say about these kind of people. He says in Matthew 6:2: “Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” If you give money to your church, don’t tell anyone about it. Let it be between you and God. He will see it and He will reward you. He says a few verses later: “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” Too many times growing up I would hear someone get up to pray, and pray the most verbose, eloquent prayer. I am not trying to judge motives, but it seemed to me that their lives didn’t show the reverence that their loquacious prayers expressed. When you pray, let it be between you and God, not to show off how important and spiritual you are. Leave the preaching to the preacher.

When people do this, they show that they do not believe that God justifies those who worship Him in secret. It is their unbelief and misunderstanding that Jesus rebukes here and in the next stories, which we find in the next few verses. “And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

The first of these two stories involves John finding a man who had been casting out demons in the name of Jesus. John knows that this man is not part of the twelve; perhaps he is trying to ride on the coattails of Jesus’ success. For whatever reason, John assumes his motives are wrong and forbids him to do it anymore. This is ironic, considering the disciples just a few verses before could not cast out the demon in this little boy. They cannot do it, but did not want others to do it, either. They are just as bad as the scribes, therefore, Jesus gives John the same treatment. He says, “Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.” Jesus says that if the man is casting out demons, he must be doing it in the power of God. If he is doing it in the name of Jesus, he must be supportive of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus wants to teach John that his Kingdom is not inclusive to those who want to be a part it, only those who refuse to meet the requirements. Jesus Himself chose His disciples, and had His reasons for not choosing this man. This man had not rejected Jesus’ ministry simply because he wasn’t one of the Twelve.

However, the other story is one involving an outright rejection. Jesus send some disciples ahead of him to prepare a place to stay. This place, however, is in a Samaritan village. The Samaritans were a group of people who were descendants from those who were half-Jewish, half-pagan. For that reason, they were rejected

wholesale because of their race, which fostered deep hatred between the two groups. It was not uncommon for one group to attack the other group. This is what makes the story of the good Samaritan so fascinating, as we shall discover in weeks ahead, Lord willing. These Samaritans are ready to accept Jesus, possibly because of the events in John 4. However, the word comes back that He is not welcome there, since He is not planning to stay and minister, only go on to Jerusalem. Luke says that His face is set to go to Jerusalem. He is rejected by this village, who refuse to offer Him hospitality.

In the culture of the day, it was considered an act of war to refuse hospitality to someone. Among the crimes of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, found in Genesis 19, is the sin of not being hospitable to the angels who come to visit Lot. In 2 Samuel 10, the king of Ammon treats ambassadors from Israel badly, and it sparks a war. Though some thought of Samaritan hospitality as unworthy for themselves, Jesus seeks it and is rejected. The disciples are indignant for Him. Luke tells us that John and James offer a suggestion: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" They offer to call down fire, as Elisha had done in 2 Kings 1, where one hundred and two soldiers were killed by fire from heaven. This offer is strange, considering these things. One, calling down fire was not common, but unique to Elisha's ministry. Two, these disciples had already proven that they did not possess this power with God. To assert that they could simply call fire from heaven was presumptuous. Three, their attitudes were completely wrong, and Jesus tells them this.

While there was animosity between Jews and Samaritans, and while it did put Jesus out, He has love for this village. Luke says that Jesus turns and rebukes them. He says, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Jesus again highlights their misunderstanding of His purpose. Jesus did not come to destroy and conquer as a king, but to seek and save as a shepherd. Ezekiel 33:11 says "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." While God has promised that those who reject Him during their lives and die in their sins will be punished in Hell, this is not God's ultimate will. He says in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Friend, if you have not yet trusted Jesus as Saviour, you are still alive that you might before you die.

The disciples, over and over again demonstrate that they did not understand what Jesus was saying. He had come to die on the cross and teach them to love one another, not to conquer Israel and free them from Rome. Jesus will come to set up His kingdom, but that is yet future, at the end of days described in both Daniel and Revelation. The reason He came the first time was to die on the cross so that we might someday enter that kingdom. Friend, have you ever trusted Jesus as your Saviour? Perhaps you, too, have a failed understanding of who Jesus is. Perhaps you do not understand all of what Jesus did in coming to the earth. Luke 19:10 says "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus came to give life to all those who will trust in Him. He did not come simply to be a good teacher, but came to offer life and forgiveness.

Friend, maybe you are a Christian this morning and you have never really grown in your walk with the Lord. Maybe you have a misguided understanding of who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He wants for your life. My counsel this morning is to find a church that can help you understand what the Scriptures say, and is full of other Christians who can help you grow in your walk with Jesus. If you have any questions about anything we have said this morning, please don't hesitate to contact us. You can do so in the following ways:

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 W. 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. You can E-mail us at [church@fbcpr.org](mailto:church@fbcpr.org). That's CHURCH at F B C P R dot O R G. Or you can log on to our website, which is [www.fbcpr.org](http://www.fbcpr.org). If you would like to have a copy of this broadcast, either in audio or transcript form, you can find it on our website tomorrow. If you enjoy this program, let us know by contacting our church. Please join us this morning at 10:30 for our worship service. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by the First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, MN.