



“Faith”
Luke 9:37-45

Idea: Faith is connected to Jesus and nothing else.

Intro: On October 13, 2010, thirty-three miners in northern Chile were rescued after spending more than two months underground. The copper and gold mine collapsed on August 5th, and they were trapped for sixty-nine days, nearly half a mile underground until they were rescued.

After the collapse, the thirty-three men, ranging in age from nineteen to sixty-three, moved to an underground emergency shelter area with a limited supply of food and water. They were not able to communicate with emergency officials. On the surface, however, engineering and mining experts from around the world worked tirelessly to free them.

On August 22nd, rescuers were able to drill a small hole traveling from the surface down to the miners, 2,300 feet underground. Not long after, the men sent up a note that simply said, “We are fine in the shelter, the thirty-three of us.” The bored hole opened up communication and rescuers were able to send down food, water, and medicine. The men also sent up video messages to their families, many of whom were camping on-site in tents during the rescue efforts.

While the miners were underground, Elizabeth Segovia, the wife of trapped miner Ariel Ticona, gave birth to a girl she named Esperanza, the Spanish word for “hope.”

On October 13th, after more than two months, the miners were lifted out safely, one by one, through a narrow escape tunnel in a rescue capsule painted blue, red, and white — the colors of the Chilean flag. It took just under twenty-three hours to lift the men safely to the surface. And more than 1 billion people around the world watched the rescue live on TV.

When you think about how desperate of a situation this was, I wonder how those thirty-three miners and their families were able to remain positive and not fall into despair during those sixty-nine long days. The fact that one of their newborn daughters was named Esperanza reveals that their positivity came from the hope shared by them all. They had hope that they would be rescued, and this hope was grounded in their faith in the ones planning their rescue.

Faith is a powerful thing. It seems to have been what kept the miners grounded as they awaited rescue. From a spiritual standpoint, the Bible tells us that faith is indeed powerful, and a necessary ingredient for salvation.

... *“The righteous shall live by faith.”* – Rom 1:17b

For by grace you have been saved through faith...

– Eph 2:8a

And without faith it is impossible to please him...

– Heb 11:6a

Faith is powerful. The Bible makes this clear. However, we must ask, “What is faith?” It is important that we ask this question. You see, if faith is necessary for one to be forgiven of all sin and accepted into God’s family, then we need to know what faith is, so that we might exercise it in our lives.

What is faith?

“Faith is to believe something is so when it is not so in order for it to become so.” – Manley Beasley

Perhaps, Beasley expanded Augustine’s description of faith.

“Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.” – Augustine

Both statements, no doubt, were derived from the writer of Hebrews.

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation... ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. – Heb 11:1-2, 6

The Bible never portrays faith as some sort of abstract belief disconnected from an anchor point. In other words, God’s Word does not call believers to put their faith in faith. On the contrary, the Bible portrays faith as a concrete belief that is anchored to an object. Believers are called to put their faith in God and His Word. As we move to the next pericope in our journey through the Gospel of Luke, faith is the theme, and the Son of God is the anchor. From these verses, we will learn a few things that faith does not do and a few things it does do. Ultimately, we will learn that spiritual faith is connected to Jesus and nothing else. And my prayer is that whatever your spiritual condition is today, you will be drawn closer to Jesus through faith.

Read Luke 9:37-45.

Inquiry: As Luke has told us, Jesus and His closest disciples have just returned from a Kingdom experience. The night before while Jesus was praying, He was transfigured. “*His clothing became dazzling white,*” (9:29) and His face was as bright as the sun (Matt 17:2). In that moment, Jesus’ deity pushed through His humanity, and His glory was on full display as Moses and Elijah spoke with Him. Peter, James, and John were there with Jesus, and as they watched this spectacle, they experienced the Kingdom of God in all its glory.

Surely, the next morning as they descended the mountainside with Jesus, the conversation was saturated with theology. They were full of questions about all they had seen. And I imagine Jesus gave them insight into what they had witnessed. Peter and John would later allude to it in their writings. Upon arriving back at the place where they had left the other disciples, a crowd had gathered, and the scribes were in an argument with the disciples (Mark 9:14). While Jesus and the three were away, the other nine disciples had attempted to cast a demon from a man’s son but failed. The situation is interesting because just a few weeks prior to this Jesus had sent them out in His power to preach and to heal (9:1-2). They came back and reported all the miraculous things they were able to do, and Mark tells us that this included the casting out of demons (Mark 6:12). On this occasion, however, these disciples could not exorcise the demon. The scribes who were present saw this as an opportunity to discredit the men and ultimately Jesus’ ministry. This is the argument that Jesus walked into when He arrived.

What a terrible situation this was! The disciples were powerless to help a broken and begging man. The insidious religious leaders were stoking the fires of slander. The crowd was confused. And the man and boy

were still hurting. As Jesus looked on the situation and listened to the man's plea, He felt like a stranger amid such unbelief. His response is telling, *"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?"*

One must wonder that if the disciples were able to heal the sick and cast out demons before, then why could they not do it on this day? This question puzzled them, and it should puzzle us. Well, their failure was not because they did not try. The men did their very best. I bet they recited and attempted to duplicate everything they had said and done before. Most likely they repeated their words and actions over and over, thinking they must have missed something somehow. Their problem was, they had subtly moved from trust in God to faith in the process. Their faith had come to rest in themselves rather than in Jesus. You see, He had sent them out before in His power and authority. Now, they were resting in their own power and authority. They are relying on their experience. This is evidenced by the fact that none of the synoptic gospel authors record the disciples praying before the exorcism. They thought because they had done it before, they should be able to do it again. The drift was quick in their lives.

Jesus' indictment was also quick. He was standing amidst a faithless group of people. Thankfully, the Lord has included this story for us in His Word so that we might learn what faith is and how to walk in it. The kind of faith on display is a spiritual faith because demon possession is a spiritual issue. Remember that *"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* There are six truths that are on display here.

1. Faith does not seek a solution from among men.

Without being too hard on this father, I want to point out that he brought his son to Jesus' disciples rather than to Jesus. Obviously, we know that Jesus was up on the mountain when he came. It is possible that he did come seeking Jesus but found only His disciples. The Gospel writers did not include this information. Given, however, what we have in the Gospels and how often people seek solutions from others rather than God, it makes sense to make this connection.

Spiritual faith, therefore, by its very definition can find no help from humanity. Men, women, boys, and girls are powerless against the spiritual darkness that holds people in bondage. This well-meaning dad no matter how much "faith" he had could not fix or get a fixer for his son. Spiritual faith, redeeming faith, does not seek a solution from among men.

2. Faith does not seek a solution from religion.

Again, I do not want to be harsh on this man, but by going to the disciples he did not exercise spiritual faith. The disciples' relationship with Jesus and their earlier ministry of preaching and healing gave them a reputation as religious leaders. This father's request of Jesus confirms this. He referred to Jesus as *"Teacher"* (Διδάσκαλος) rather than "Master" or "Lord." He went to the disciples hoping to find help from these religious leaders. He had heard all the stories of others being healed and freed from demonic possession. When the disciples failed to cast the demon out, it is possible that he sought help from the scribes who were using the situation to cast verbal stones at Jesus and His ministry.

The situation highlights that spiritual faith, redeeming faith, does not seek a solution from religion. It shows that religious exercise devoid of the Person and power of God is futile and empty.

3. Faith does not seek a solution from outside God's Word.

The boy's father and the people in the crowd were not the only ones confused about spiritual faith. The disciples were also struggling. Jesus had explained to them multiple times in about a three-week period that He was going to be betrayed, killed, buried, and resurrected. They, however, refused to believe it. Peter even pulled Jesus aside and rebuked Him. Then on the mountain, Peter, James, and John

witnessed Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus about the things that awaited Him in Jerusalem. Once again, they were confronted with this new reality in their spiritual paradigm. Jesus would be going to a cross.

After Jesus had casted out the demon from the boy and while the crowd was marveling over this wonder, the Lord again informed the disciples that He would be delivered into the hands of men (vs. 44). Luke tells us that they did not understand it. How can that be? I believe the reason they could not understand it was because they did not want to understand it. Jesus dying did not fit their preconceived ideas for the Messiah. Rather than listening to and heeding the Word of God, they sought a solution outside of it. Therefore, their disbelief kept them in unbelief (vs. 45)

Today, the Bible still calls each of us to find life in Jesus through his death, burial, and resurrection. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him (John 14:6). Jesus' teaching reveals to us that spiritual faith, redeeming faith, does not seek a solution outside of God's Word.

4. Faith seeks the face of God.

Let's now point out what this father did right. When he saw Jesus, he came to Jesus. Mark tells us that when the crowd saw Jesus, they ran to Him (Mark 9:15). This is a beautiful picture of spiritual, redeeming faith. They saw Jesus' face and sought Him out.

Spiritual, redeeming faith is exercised when we too seek the face of God. It is exercised when we seek Him rather than other people, religion, or our own way.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. – Matt 11:28

5. Faith places the need in the hands of God.

Again, the boy's father models faith for us. It is an imperfect faith, but it is spiritual faith. He placed his son and the soul of his son in the hands of Jesus. He acknowledged that he had no other hope.

As fallen people, our default position is to seek aid from anyone and everything other than from the Lord. We run to our family and friends. We lean on our own intellect and abilities. We seek help from religious systems and philosophies. We will exhaust every resource available to us before coming to God.

If the stories we are reading in Luke's Gospel are true, and they are, then this course of action literally makes no sense. Luke has shown us over and over again that mankind is powerless to save and to heal. So, why do people refuse to place their need in the hands of God? The answer is rebellion. Men, women, boys, and girls are all living in rebellion against the God who created them. They are enemies and haters of God (Rom 3). Therefore, when a person refuses to place his or her spiritual need in the hands of God, it is not an exercise of spiritual faith. It is an act of rebellion. Spiritual, redeeming faith brings the need to God and places it in His hands.

6. Faith believes the Word of God.

While the crowd was marveling, Jesus reiterated the fact that He was going to be betrayed and killed. He wanted His followers to know that His Word reigns. It is fact. It is law. It is truth. His Word cannot be deviated. It cannot be thwarted. It cannot be replaced.

Jesus spoke a word, and the demon was cast from the boy (vs. 42). His Word is powerful and authoritative. Therefore, when it comes to spiritual, redeeming faith, we must approach the Lord according to all that He has said.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. – Rom 10:17

Jesus told the disciples that He would die and be resurrected in Jerusalem. He would be offered as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for sin. All of this took place just as Jesus said. Therefore, salvation is only available through faith in His death, burial, and resurrection. Spiritual, redeeming faith is not a belief that we will be accepted by God on our own merit. It is not a belief that God will look past our sin and shame. It is not a belief that we can ride the spiritual coattails of someone else. No, spiritual, redeeming faith believes the Word of God.

Read Eph 2:1-9.

The Bible says that in your sin, you are spiritually dead and under the wrath of God. But God in mercy and love has paid the penalty for your sin and made it possible for it to be forgiven and removed. Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice is the key that accesses this redemption.

Conclusion: Those thirty-three miners who were trapped underground in a mine for sixty-nine days never lost their hope. They had hope that they would be rescued, and this hope was grounded in their faith in the ones planning their rescue. Jesus was revealing to His disciples His rescue plan. It included a cross, a tomb, and a resurrection body. While His disciples struggled to comprehend how this could be for the Messiah, all they were being asked to do was believe it. Their faith needed to rest in Jesus as He worked out the rescue plan. They were not being asked to faith into faith. Quite the opposite! They were being asked to anchor their lives on Jesus. They were being asked to faith into Him rather than trust in themselves or religion. They were to seek, trust, and believe His Word. We, too, are being asked to believe on Jesus for our redemption. Have you put your faith in Jesus?