

Luke Chapter 9 v 1 - 10

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 February 2019

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] from God's Word, from our Bibles, and from the Gospel of Luke and Chapter 9. Gospel of Luke and Chapter 9, and if you have one of the church Bibles, that's page 1038.

Page 1038, Luke 9, beginning at verse 1. We've been journeying through this wonderful Gospel, this record of the life of Jesus, and seeing how he has been revealing the very kingdom of God, what it means to be part of that kingdom, and what happens in that kingdom, where he is in command of a person's life, where he is ruling and reigning.

And we're going to pick up from Chapter 9, verse 1, and read down to verse 10. When Jesus had called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who were ill.

He told them, take nothing for the journey. No staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.

If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. So they set out, went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

[1 : 33] Now Herod the Tetrarch heard about all that was going on, and he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life.

But Herod said, I beheaded John. Who then is this I hear such things about? And he tried to see him. When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done.

Then he took them with him, and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida. Turn then, if you would, back to Luke in chapter 9 and to this event in the life of our Lord Jesus and his disciples.

Luke 9, 1 to 10. I don't know whether you were brought up on nursery rhymes, or whether you've brought your children up on nursery rhymes. I think they're good.

I think they're good. Do you remember the nursery rhyme, Mary, Mary? I'm not going to sing it for you. Mary, Mary, quite contrary. How does your garden grow? With?

[2 : 48] And pretty maids all in a row. All the children go, ah. And all the mature people were knowing it off by heart. Like many nursery rhymes, that nursery rhyme, of course, is what they call a nonsense rhyme.

A bit like the cat and the fiddle and the cow jumped over. They're nonsense rhymes. They're just a bit of fun. Gardens don't grow, do they, with silver bells and cockle shells? Or even any pretty maids, for that matter.

How do you get your garden to grow? How do you get your flowers and vegetables to fruit and to flower? Some people talk to their plants.

Some people play music to their vegetables. All sorts of ways gardeners have discovered over the years to get the best out of their gardens.

In John 15, the Lord Jesus Christ refers to God the Father as the gardener, the vine dresser.

[3 : 48] And he goes on to tell us about how he prunes and tends the branches of the vine so that they can be fruitful and grow. And Jesus tells us, of course, that he is the vine.

And those who are his people, those who are in relationship to him, those who are his disciples, are the branches. We're united to Jesus. We're one with him. And we are to grow.

We are to bear fruit in our own lives. And I believe that one of the vital areas of growth, one of the most important things that as Christians that needs to keep growing in us is faith.

Is faith. Paul, when he writes to the Christians at Thessalonica in his second letter, He rejoices in the fact that the faith of the believers is growing more and more, he says.

The disciples needed faith. They lacked faith. Later on, when in Luke's gospel, in fact itself, in chapter 17, they asked Jesus, increase our faith.

[4 : 58] In the last passage that we looked at last Sunday, we saw the very importance of faith. It's the element from which every part of the Christian life develops and matures and grows.

Everything comes from faith. When that woman with the bleed was healed, Jesus said to her in verse 48 of chapter 8, Daughter, your faith has healed you.

Remember when Jairus got the news that his daughter had died, what did Jesus say to him? Don't be afraid. Just believe. Just have faith.

The question that Mary was asked about how her garden grew is an important question for us. How does our faith grow?

How do we grow in faith? How does faith develop? How does it continue to increase? Well, that's found all the way through the Bible. Everywhere we find that lesson about growing faith.

[5 : 58] But also here, I believe, in chapter 9 and the verses that we read. I think we have a lot to learn here from Jesus sending out his disciples on this first mission, as it were, this first adventure.

Really, those 12, those inner circle, has a lot to teach us about what Jesus was doing with their faith. Because, to be quite honest, what he was asking them to do was a huge leap of faith, wasn't it?

Here they were, fishermen, tax collectors, various other people, and Jesus, we're told, gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.

And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who were well. He was putting their faith to the test. He was expecting them to do things which were way beyond them.

Impossible. In fact, it seems particularly in verse 3, he is testing their faith. He tells them, take nothing for the journey. No staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.

[7 : 03] You've got to go just as you are. How on earth were they going to do these things? How on earth could they possibly do these impossible tasks with nothing as well?

Well, I believe that Jesus was increasing their faith. He was causing their faith to grow. He was putting them to the test to see that they could trust him and prove him faithful.

That's been the time-honored way that God has always grown faith for his people. All the way through the Bible, you see again and again, God calls his people to take a step of faith that their faith may grow.

He puts them outside their comfort zone that they can actually prove that he is faithful to them. Just think about the man who's known as the father of the faith, Abraham.

In Hebrews 11, we're told in verse 8, And later on in that same chapter, we're reminded of that other test that God brought to Abraham.

[8 : 18] In verse 17, by faith, Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. That incredible event where he was to take his son up into Mount Moriah and to put him to death.

Which, of course, he didn't do. But it was a test. How far would he trust God? How far would he go? Think of Moses. Moses, the man who ran away from Egypt when he's 40, being told by God 40 years to go back to Egypt and confront the most powerful man in the world and tell him to let the people go.

He'd only been a shepherd. Then he had to stand before the Red Sea with the hordes of the Pharaoh's armies coming down against him and the people.

And he had to trust God by faith that he would part the sea that they could walk through. And in other occasions, God says to him, Go and strike a rock that it can produce water. All of these were tests of faith.

Gideon, that young man who hid himself away because he was so scared. God says to him, Go and face 135,000 of your enemies and take 300 soldiers with you.

[9 : 32] How? How? All these things. God was growing faith in his people by calling them out of their comfort zone. That's what he has to do with us.

Dear friends, as Christians, that's what's necessary that we might grow in our faith, that we might mature, that we might learn that God is trustworthy and faithful and dependable.

So the question is this morning, How is your faith in Jesus? Is your faith still growing? Or has your faith become stunted?

Has your faith perhaps even become rather weak? Or is it wilting maybe? I want to just put before you some questions.

Questions which I think are something of a check-up for your faith. When was the last time that you felt hopeless to resolve a problem in your life, but you knew that God would work things out?

[10:46] When was the last time that you prayed so earnestly and from the heart that you were brought to tears? When was the last time that you did something because you knew it was what God wanted, even though you felt scared and inadequate?

When was the last time you were out of your comfort zone in speaking or acting to share Jesus with someone else? If you can't answer those questions positively, or even if you can say, Well, yes, but it was such a long, long time ago, then really your faith is in need of some attention.

It's not growing. It's not developing. It may even be drooping. It may be drooping.

Jesus had tested their faith before. Remember just in chapter 8, how they'd been on the sea, on the Lake of Galilee, and that storm had come up. Jesus had spoken to them and calmed the storm, and what did he say to them?

Where is your faith? He asked the disciples. He knew that it was weak. He knew that it was still very immature, that it wasn't strong. He was going to test their faith again and again, even as we come to the next passage in chapter 9, with the feeding of the 5,000.

[12:49] He's going to say to them, You give them something to eat. 5,000 people. You feed them. Exercise is what's needed.

If you go to the gym, there are various machines and equipment that will focus on particular areas of your body that need development, whether it be on your tummy, or your legs, or your arms, or wherever it may be.

Those particular machines exercise that particular part of the body, so make it fit and strong. And here I believe there are three exercises that Jesus instructs his disciples to practice, to use, to do, so that they could grow and would grow in their faith.

Each one of them, dear friends, we need as well, so that we may increase in faith, so that we may grow into the men and women that God has saved us to be in this life.

And the first one here, I believe, is in those first two verses, when we're told that Jesus called the 12 together, gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.

[14:00] He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who are ill. This is the exercise of service. The exercise of service, putting aside for a while the whole matter of authority to cast out demons, we've looked at that in other passages before, the primary purpose of their mission was to serve others, isn't it?

They were to go out and help others. They were to help them physically with physical ailments and diseases. They were to help them spiritually, not only with the casting out of demons, but the proclaiming of the kingdom of God.

Try and put yourself in their shoes for a moment. You can imagine how they must have felt apprehensive as they left Jesus, probably in twos as he does elsewhere.

And they go into the surrounding villages. Perhaps they even talked along the way. What's the best way to approach people and to talk to them that we've come to heal and to help them and to reclaim the good news?

How should we do it? Should we knock on the doors? Should we stand in the center of the street? Should we go to the market? And as they went and as they served these people as Jesus had commanded them, it's clear that people were healed and people were helped.

[15:17] Look at verse six. They set out, went from the village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere. It took place. Will it really happen?

When I pray for this person or ask God to heal them, will they really be healed? Well, they were. And surely as that was going on, their faith is growing. Faith in Jesus.

He's given me the authority. He's told me to go. He said in his name to heal these people. And when I've done that, it's happened. See, when we serve others, we grow in faith.

There's a wonderful principle in the Bible. It's more blessed to give than to receive. As we give of ourselves, as we use the opportunities that God gives us to serve others, we grow in faith.

Especially when we serve in ways and areas where we feel inadequate. Areas in which we feel that we haven't got what it takes. Areas that we feel fearful.

[16:21] And even more so, I think, when we serve the spiritual needs of others. There's a multitude of opportunities for each one of us to serve others in all sorts of ways which are outside of our comfort zone.

And these things will cause us to grow in faith. Even here in the church, there's opportunities to serve. Have you thought about joining one of the groups that go into the old folks' homes once a month, sing hymns?

Somebody presents and shares the gospel and talks with them. Now you don't need to worry. These old folk won't bite. Most of them haven't got their own teeth.

Sorry. Become a meet and greet person on the door. So when people arrive on a Sunday morning, you can welcome them and say hello. And as your faith increases, there's many other opportunities and ways you can serve.

John's going to like me for saying this. Go on a UBM beach team. If you've never done it before. Or a Christian Answers team. Or something similar to that. A short term mission.

[17:40] Or work. Or just a day. Or supporting. Or giving. Or volunteering. There's so many ways. And all these things as we give of ourselves, as we serve, beyond our own abilities, beyond our own strength, beyond our own intellect, as we give these things and we trust in God, we'll find ourselves changed.

Yes, Jesus can actually work through me. Jesus can actually use me. Our faith will grow and increase as we serve.

Are you serving anywhere? Then find somewhere. If you're not. Find a way to serve.

It doesn't have to be necessarily in those contexts I've shared. But it needs to be somewhere where you're having to rely on the Lord. You're having to trust him to help you to do those things that you never thought were possible.

I want to make that point that this is not about building up your confidence in yourself. This builds up your confidence in Jesus. because it's not you who does it.

[18:52] It's him working in you and through you. As we saw here, Jesus gave them the power and the authority. It wasn't that Peter had power and authority or Simon or John or the others. They had nothing. But they went trusting in the power of Jesus.

Then there's the exercise of insufficiency. It's meant to be three S's but I couldn't think of a second S. So it's insufficiency. A lack of sufficiency.

Look at what Jesus tells him in verse 3. Take nothing for the journey. No staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. That's a strange thing, isn't it?

If you're sending somebody out on a journey or an expedition in that way, even if it's something as simple as that, just a few days or a week, you've got to make sure that they've got supplies to keep them on the way, to make sure they've got food and all those other things.

These are the normal things you'd take with you if you're going from home for a little time. You wouldn't think of going on holiday and having nothing, just going with the clothes you're standing up with and of course not.

[19:55] Pack a bag. But Jesus was making them grow in faith. He's particularly laying this challenge before them that he would provide for their needs and all their needs. No staff.

Staff would be something that you would take almost like a club in case you're attacked by robbers to defend yourself with Jesus saying, I'm your defender. I'm the one who will protect you.

No food and no money. That means that they would basically starve unless Jesus provided for them, which he does. And no shirt or no extra shirt.

When it says shirt here, it doesn't mean like the shirt I'm sort of wearing or maybe you're wearing. More something of a, like the old-fashioned sort of night dress, if you know what I mean.

Night shirt, that's it. Old-fashioned night shirt. That extra layer. Now you'd want an extra layer if you're sleeping rough outside at night because you'd be cold. So they're trusting Jesus to provide their shelter.

[20:55] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. All of us at times are financially squeezed.

All of us at times, I'm sure, have known when our outgoings exceed our income. That's forced us if we're Christians to trust the Lord.

It's taught us a great lesson of faith. And for many of us, I'm sure now, the situation is that we probably don't have to face those troubles anymore. They were, when we were younger or when we were first married or when we were in a particular situation.

For most of us, we're comfortably off. So how can we be tested in this way? How can we trust the Lord Jesus to provide for all our needs in every way?

One of the ways we can do that is to make sure that we're giving. Make sure that we're giving. Make sure that the finances that God provides for us, we're not simply spending upon ourselves, and just looking for our own needs or trusting in our own provision or making sure that our life is more luxurious.

[22 : 07] It's very clear, isn't it, all through Scripture that we are called to be givers. As you've received, so give. No matter what our income is, we're to give some of that away.

We can give it away to mission, if we feel that's something very important to us. We can give it to support the local fellowship here or other local churches. We can give it to support charities, particularly those that are taking aid in the name of the Lord Jesus into situations or helping persecuted Christians.

Dear friends, we need to have lighter pockets if we're to grow in faith. because if it's only that we are storing away for ourselves in this world, Jesus had something to say to a man who did that. He said, you fool. Are we investing in eternity? So it's an exercise of insufficiency. Don't be afraid in that sense if things are stretched and tied.

Don't be afraid if finances are hard to come by. The Lord Jesus has promised to supply all our needs. Then there's finally here the exercise of suffering.

[23 : 26] Verse 4, whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave that town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.

Jesus was warning his disciples that they should expect that in some of the villages they would not be welcome. Well, Jesus himself hadn't been welcomed. Remember, just in chapter 8 when he'd healed that man from all those terrible demons, all the people, verse 37, of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them.

Remember what we're doing, dear friends, ultimately is, as Christians, we're living out that life that is a Christ-like life. Some people will not accept and receive our help or care or love or witness or testimony.

In fact, Jesus said, when they don't welcome you, leave their town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony. It's a way of saying you've rejected us, so we're not going to take anything of yours with us, not even the dust from your town.

What's the real reason why we don't share or speak up for Jesus or admit that we're Christians to others? It's because we're afraid, isn't it?

[24 : 46] We're afraid that we'll be rejected. We're afraid that we might be mocked or ridiculed. We're afraid that we might suffer. But see, fear has nothing to do with faith or rather, faith has nothing to do with fear.

In fact, they're opposites. Remember what he said to Jairus when his daughter had died, don't be afraid, just believe. Fear pushes faith away.

Fear prevents us from trusting and living and finding God to be faithful in our lives. Fear controls us and faith has little room.

Now, that doesn't mean that when we share the gospel with somebody or we speak to people or we talk about being a Christian that we're obnoxious about it. A lot of us perhaps can get people not liking us just because we're not particularly nice people sometimes or rude or insensitive or thoughtless.

If we share the gospel with people, we mustn't do it with anger or judgmentalism or rudeness. That's not how Christ proclaimed the gospel. But we will definitely feel weak when we share with them about Jesus.

[26 : 03] We'll feel weak when we try to talk to them about what Christ means to us. We'll feel scared and we'll feel like we have to pray and we'll find ourselves growing in faith.

Growing in faith. Yes, Lord Jesus, even though I've got a stutter and I find it hard to express what I'm saying, in fact it feels rather good.

It feels good to be a little bit scared. Imagine it's a bit like parachuting not having done it and never will. There's an exhilaration and a terror that probably go hand in hand.

That's a bit like witnessing and sharing Jesus. There's a terror and there's also an exhilaration.

When did you last tell somebody that you were a Christian and that you were going to church or that you trusted in the Lord Jesus?

When did you speak to them and talk about their faith? Did you just take it for granted that everybody knows I'm a Christian so I don't need to mention it? Well, yes you do.

[27 : 07] You can talk about Jesus. You can talk about what he's done for you. Your faith will grow, be strengthened and increased. Jesus did these things for the disciples.

He set them out there because he loved them and because he knew for them the great need they had was a stronger and greater and clearer faith and that can only come about by testing. You see, if we stay with weak faith then we find ourselves handicapped. Weak faith is debilitating. Weak faith robs us of the assurance that God is faithful and loves us and cares for us. It robs us of the joy that there is in serving the Lord and living for him and delighting him. It robs us of the peace that we can trust him and look to him for the future. Weak faith makes us ineffective. It makes us unfruitful. what we need to seek, dear friends, is for more faith.

[28 : 19] This is what Peter writes to the Christians in 2 Peter. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate that share in the divine nature having escaped the corruption in the world called by evil desires.

And so he goes on to say for this very reason make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection and here's what he says for if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. Let's pray together. We thank you oh Lord that you know us completely and entirely and you know the state of our faith but some of us oh Lord if we're honest our faith is virtually non-existent it's just a tiny glimmer perhaps it's so low we don't know whether we really can trust you Lord our faith has been knocked our faith in others faith in ourselves so many times that it's hard for us to really put all our faith in you someone we can't see but Lord we know that ultimately that's what's needed more than anything else is for us to have that living and real faith and we pray oh Lord that where we lack it that you would give us that faith that faith that sees that you are the one who we can trust with our sins that you will forgive us fully and completely as we've thought already that you're the one we can trust with our lives that you're the one we can trust with our futures we pray oh Lord that you would give to us such real saving faith for some of us

Lord who are Christians we've allowed our faith to become flabby we've allowed it to become wilting we really haven't exercised that faith at all we've just gone day to day and we've not really been outside of our comfort zone at all we've never put you to the test at least not for a long long time and we're afraid to do so we're afraid that Lord if our faith is put to the test that we found to be false or failing but Lord ultimately it is not our faith that's being tested when it's you that we are putting to the test your faithfulness your goodness your reliability so Lord again we ask that you would give to us boldness and courage to trust you and that you give us opportunities even in this week to step outside of that comfort zone to take that step of faith that leap of faith it may seem in whatever way that is to trust you to trust you again to trust you once more and Lord to see and to feel our faith growing in you we pray for those of us perhaps we feel that our faith is just exactly where it should be and we we're doing rather well help us not to become complacent Lord help us Lord not to become stationary or static or stagnant in our faith

[32 : 13] Lord keep on testing and stretching our faith daily weekly that Lord we may ever be reliant upon you never let us Lord become self confident or have self faith help us always to rely upon you for all things for we know then we shall never fall for you will never let us fall and so Lord we ask these things now and pray oh Lord that our faith in you may not only bless us but bless others too for we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amen now