**YOU UNBELIEVING AND PERVERSE GENERATION**

Luke 9:37-45

Key verse 41

*41“You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”*

If you Google “What is wrong with this generation” what will you find? You will find tons of articles talking about the problems of this generation, as well as some blaming the previous generations. Some article titles are: 10 Reasons Why Generation Y Is Soft, Why Millennials Can’t Grow Up, Generation X: America’s Neglected ‘Middle Child’, and Baby Boomers: Five Reasons They Are Our Worst Generation. By the way, I fall somewhere between neglected middle child and the worst. However, while these articles might be helpful in understanding this generation, Jesus took an entirely different approach. He did not regard the unique problems of each generation, but rather challenged the fundamental and universal problem of all generations—the problem of sin—especially the sin of unbelief. In this passage we’ll consider how Jesus challenged the problem of the generation in two parts.

Part I. Jesus Heals A Demon-Possessed Boy (37-43a)

In the previous passage, Jesus had taken three of his disciple up onto a mountain to pray. There, Jesus was transfigured before them, and the disciples caught a glimpse of the glory and splendor of the kingdom of God. I’m sure, they would have liked to stay there forever, but unfortunately they had to come down. When they did, they were immediately confronted with the cold hard reality of this world. Look at verses 37-39.

*37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.*

This man’s son was possessed by a demon—an impure spirit. As a father he must have loved his son very much. He could vividly remember the first time he held his newborn son in his arms, how he changed his diapers, how he watched him take his first steps. He was so happy the first time his son said “da da!” Just look at how Greg Coco loves his son Keith and chases him around Center!

As the son grew, his father became his best friend. Maybe they played catch in the back yard. They might have gone to many baseball games or on fishing trips together. With pride, his father celebrated his son’s achievements, like the time he won an attendance award or brought home a good report card. When his son reached adolescence, he gave him books to read and taught him to shave.

But one day he noticed that something was not right. Maybe, in his own weakness or ignorance, he failed to protect his son from evil influences. Or maybe he neglected to have Bible study with his son. However, it happened, his son became possessed by an impure spirit. A demon would seize him and throw him into convulsions, so that he would foam at the mouth. It hardly left him and was destroying him, and all this father could do was watch. He must have been overcome by fatalism and despair because of his son.

However, when he heard about Jesus, hope rose in his heart. He decided to bring his son to Jesus. But when arrived, Jesus was nowhere to be found. So what did he do?

Look at verse 40. *40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”*

It’s interesting that Jesus disciples were unable to drive out the demon. In 9:1 we learned that Jesus. *“ …gave them power and authority to drive out all demons …”* What does *all* mean? *All* means *all*! So how come they could not drive out this demon?

In a separate account of this event, in Mark 9:29, Jesus said, *“This kind [of demon] can come out only by prayer.”* These words seem to indicate that the disciples didn’t pray. This is surprising! Why didn’t they pray before engaging is such a serious spiritual battle?

Let’s read verse 41. *41 “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”*

The disciples could not drive out the demon because of their unbelief. They could not even pray. When, Jesus first sent them out, they believed and obeyed his words, and they were successful. But after hearing the teaching of Jesus suffering and death, and that they must deny themselves and take up their cross, their faith wavered. So when they failed to drive out the demon, Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief.

However, Jesus was not only rebuking his disciples, but also the unbelief of the entire generation. He was rebuking the father of the demon-possessed boy. He was rebuking the crowds. Jesus rebuked his own generation, but that does not mean that this rebuke is not also for our own generation. In a sense Jesus rebuked all generations from the fall of man until now, for their unbelief, because unbelief is the root of our sin.

Here, Jesus also used the word perverse—“you unbelieving and perverse generation” The dictionary defines the word *perverse* as: 1) *Willfully determined or disposed to go counter to what is expected or desired.* 2) *Wayward or cantankerous.* 3) *Persistent or obstinate in what is wrong.* 4) *Turned away from or rejecting what is right, good or proper; wicked or corrupt*.

When we don’t believe Jesus’ words, we don’t pray, we don’t listen, we don’t obey, and as we persist in sinning we become perverse. Some think that unbelief is the result of intellectual enlightenment. But it is not. Unbelief is a deliberate decision to cheat one’s conscience and ignore the truth of the existence of God.

Romans 1:21 says, “*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him....”* All men know the truth in their consciences that God exists, but they deliberately suppress the knowledge of God to enjoy sinful perversion. The problem of unbelief, or sin of unbelief is also apparent in our own generation.

In our generation, demons use addictions to destroy, especially, many young people. They seize them through reality-altering drugs, through the virtual reality of video games and other technologies, through the fantasy of anemia and pornography, and even through the vanities of the world of sports, music or entertainment. These things look cool, exciting, cute or pleasurable, but they lead a generation away from the ultimate reality found in Jesus Christ and the life that lives according to the truth of God. If one can suppress the reality of God, they don’t have to grow up—they don’t have to take responsibility for their lives they don’t have to face judgment for their sins, but this is lie. In this generation, impure spirits are taking many sons away from their fathers and destroying many children. Jesus rebukes this generation for their unbelief and perversity.

Look at verse 41 again. 41*“How long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”*

Thus far Jesus bore the unbelief of his generation, beginning with his disciples. But he could not stay with them forever—not physically. Soon he would return to his Father in heaven. At that time, his disciple would have to take up the cross of leadership for their generation. Jesus must have been exasperated with his disciples who quickly lost their faith. But Jesus took responsibility for the situation. He said to the father, “Bring your son here.” No matter what problem our children our Bible students have, we need to bring them to Jesus.

Look at verse 42. 42 *“Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.”*

For a moment it looked like things were getting worse. When God works, the devil works all the more. The convulsions this boy suffered in being brought to Jesus shows that they demon was in pure desperation mode. The demon was making one final and futile attempt to deceive. But the demon could not stand before the power and authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus rebuked the demon and healed the boy.

No one was able to take responsibility for this boy, not his father, not the disciple and certainly nobody in the crowd, but Jesus did it. Jesus took responsibility for him. Jesus freed him, so that he was free to love and obey God. Then Jesus gave him back to his father. His father must have been so happy to receive his son back. The disciples must have been relieved that Jesus came and picked up the broken pieces of the mess they had made. And the crowd stood in awe.

Look at verse 43. *“And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.”*

Again, what does *all* mean? *All* means *all*! When God works who can deny it. Even demons shutter at his presence. No one can stand up to the truth of God, or to the amazing greatness of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Part II. Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time (43b-45)

As everyone was enjoying the greatness of God, Jesus spoke privately to his disciples. Look at verse 44. 44 *“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.”*

This was now the second time Jesus spoke of his death on the cross. Why was this message worth repeating? It was because, whether they like it or not, whether they felt good about it or not, Jesus gave them this message, for it is the only way of salvation.

However, this time, Jesus did not talk in detail about his suffering, death and resurrection, as he had previously (9:21). Here, Jesus simply spoke of his betrayal. He wanted his disciples to digest the fact of his betrayal was the first step to accepting his suffering, death and resurrection. Sill, it was not easy to talk about his betrayal. It meant that one of the Twelve would betray him to the religious leaders.

It could be said that Betrayal is the most difficult pain for any human being to endure. Betrayal is not the work of an enemy. Betrayal is the work of a loved one. It is to forsake the intimate trust of a relationship. In this way, the heart of betrayal is unbelief.

Though Jesus is in very nature God, he came to this world as a man. He called twelve disciples and gave them the special privilege to be with him and be raised as apostles. He loved and trusted them intimately. Of course, he knew the weaknesses and sinful nature of each one. Yet he loved and trusted them unconditionally. At the same time, Jesus knew he would be betrayed by one of them and abandoned by all of them. Yet he continued to love and trust them to the end. Jesus was willing to bear the pain of betrayal and even to die on the cross for their sins and ours.

It was time for Jesus’ disciples to listen carefully to Jesus’ words and to struggle spiritually with the meaning of Jesus’ betrayal. It was time to open their spiritual eyes and see what Jesus was doing. It was time to make personal decisions of faith to follow Jesus. But how did they respond?

Verse 45 says, “*But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.”* It was hidden from them because they were afraid to think about Jesus’ betrayal. They were afraid to let the truth of the gospel penetrate into their hearts. Ultimately, their fear came from the fear of death. Their fear came from reluctance to give up earthly glory. Jesus knew it would be hard for his disciples to accept. But Jesus predicted his betrayal clearly. Jesus taught the truth even when his disciples could not understand it and were afraid to ask about it.

Jesus wanted his disciples to examine their hearts and repent of their unbelief. He wanted them put aside their worldly dreams and accept his suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus wanted them to make a personal decision of faith to commit their lives to him no matter what would happen. It was the only way for them to save their lives.

Likewise, we really need to make decisions of faith to follow Jesus. We can follow Jesus as part of the crowd for a while. We can enjoy the spiritual atmosphere of Jesus’ ministry and the wonderful work of God Jesus does with amazement for the time being. But sooner or later, each of us must make a personal decision of faith to follow Jesus. Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it” (9:24).

In this passage we learn that we must pray for our generation to repent our sin of unbelief. Is seems that the power of demons and perverse people is so strong, but they are no match for Jesus’ power. When we repent our unbelief, we and accept Jesus cross, we can take up responsibility for this generation and pray for them—that America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We need to bring our children and our Bible students Jesus by faith.

One word: You unbelieving and perverse generation