

The transfiguration (Luke 9)

Part 1

Speaker	Norman Anderson
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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] ...said the Christ of God. He straightly charged them and commanded them to tell no man of that thing, saying, The sin of man must suffer many things. And they rejected the elders and chief priests and scribes, and were slain and beraised the third day. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross dead, and follow me.

And whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For he is a man of numbers. If he gain the whole world and lose himself, he will be cast away. But whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed. [00:01:05] And he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and in the holy angels. I tell you, it is good to be some studying here, but you have not tasted death till you see the kingdom of God. The king of Barcelona, James, took the earth, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and blistering. And behold, they talked with him two men, which were modest and ignited, who appeared in glory, for the sake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep. And when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. [00:02:07] And it came to pass, as they departed from him, that Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here.

Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Not knowing what he said, only thus spake. There came a cloud, and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud. There came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him. And when the voice was passed, Jesus was found alone.

And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen. Amen.

[00:03:05] I just mention this, dear brethren, in order to get into my blessed theme.

The Lord is introduced to us here alone, praying.

A dependent man, as we heard this afternoon. I don't dwell on it, I just draw attention to it, because this is a blessed subject for your consideration and mine. As he was alone, praying.

And in verse 28, that we've also read, went up into a mountain to pray.

And as he prayed.

I could tell you probably how many times he's viewed praying in Luke's gospel, but that's not the point. The great thing is, dear brethren, that you and I are presented here with one who's going to introduce as opening up the path of discipleship.

[00:04:05] And he exhibits in his own blessed person the moral features necessary in those who would take the path.

As I say, I'll just say that as introductory.

As introductory.

His disciples were with him, and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? Verse 20. But whom say ye that I am? Peter answered and said, The Christ of God.

A blessed confession. Don't tell me that Matthew says so-and-so in his gospel, or he calls so-and-so. The great thing here is that the Lord Jesus Christ is presented as the one who is absolutely competent to and adequate for carrying through the will of God.

[00:05:03] He's the anointed vessel.

And this is the particular presentation in Luke's gospel.

The anointed man.

Christ, the anointed vessel for the execution of the will of God, for the establishment of the purpose of God. And Peter says here, The Christ of God.

Are we, dear brethren, absolutely assured that our Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely competent to carry into blessed effect everything that is committed to him of God?

If we are, there's no need to say, of course, we'll never turn aside from him for a moment. [00:06:01] And the great thing that the Spirit of God would press upon your heart and mind tonight is this, that the one who will now invite us into the path of discipleship is so blessedly attractive in the glory of his person and in the sufficiency of his ability and wisdom, the one who so attracts us is such that we cannot possibly fail to respond. Does it draw you?

We said in prayer today, I think the beginning of the reading, if I remember rightly, draw me and we will run after thee.

There is an attractive grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ which to the believer is irresistible.

In other words, when he speaks and invites, you cannot help stepping out into the path of discipleship.

[00:07:01] And when you do, of course, you begin to learn that the one who is so irresistibly attractive to you is unwanted here.

And this blessed man who amongst other things would open out to you and me the blessedness of what is heavenly is refused on earth. And that's where we are today. Here upon earth with the light of heaven streaming down upon us from the face of that blessed man rejected and crucified here. So here in these verses, he straightly charged them, verse 21, and commanded them to tell no man that thing, saying, the son of man must suffer many things.

Why must the son of man suffer many things?

[00:08:02] Every man is going to be tested by the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of man.

And the disposition of men to him will demonstrate how far every man, all men, are from God.

And I would just say this, that if you and I have embarked, or if we do desire to embark upon the path of discipleship, two things are essential immediately. One is the conviction of the greatness and the glory of the person of Christ, and the other, that you're living in a world where he is rejected. Christ is rejected here. I remember years ago, just as a young Christian in my teens, [00:09:02] I was converted in my seventeenth year, as a young Christian in my teens, I was arrested by the title of a book called The People's Christ. I thought it must be good. Well, let me tell you from the word of God that I've learned that our Lord Jesus Christ is not the People's Christ. I have learned, thank God, that everything that God has for the people is invested in him. But I have learned that he's not the People's Christ. I remember standing in an open-air meeting, One Lord's Tonight, listening to an eminent preacher in Newcastle upon Tyne who was holding forth on the Christ of God, and he called him the Popular Christ.

He called him the People's Christ. And though I was a young Christian, I began to say to myself, Is he the Popular Christ? [00:10:01] Why the cross?

I began to say, Is he the People's Christ? Why them?

We're with him!

We will not have this man to reign over us.

And it was impressed upon me then, as it never had been before that moment, that the Christ is not the Popular Christ and is not the People's Christ. And the scripture tells us here, the Son of Man must suffer many things because the whole world system and the man who dwells in it was to be tested by the presentation of himself. And that's where we read, with the cross immediately in prospect, our blessed Lord said, Now is the judgment of this world.

Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Oh young Christian, let me just say to you, [00:11:03] don't be surprised if you find that people are not keen to hear you speak about your savior because they were keen to crucify him and they did.

And so he says here, the Son of Man must suffer many things.

Not only is the suffering of the Son of Man that was in prospect then, thank God it's been passed through now. But while it was in prospect then, that that brought to light the utter exposure of what men are, brought to light the blessed disclosure of what God is.

And so we read in this verse, I pass on, time is short, I know, and be slain and be raised the third day.

There are two things here [00:12:01] that seem so opposite, rejected, raised.

One is the manifestation of the hatred of the world in which you and I are living and the other is the achievement of the triumph of God.

And so here in the very same verse that speaks of the sufferings of Christ, speaks of his rejection at the hands of the religious world, speaks of his being slain, it also speaks of his glorious resurrection.

The triumph of God is stamped upon this blessed statement that fell from the lips of our Lord.

Suffer, rejection, slain, resurrection.

And you and I on the one hand are associated, if we are attracted to him [00:13:02] and desire to be disciples in this sense, that is to follow him in the path that he's opened out for us, you and I will find ourselves associated with the rejected and the hated Christ. We will find ourselves associated with the triumphant, a resurrected and a glorious Christ. All heaven is opened to those who are prepared. And when I say that, I mean in a practical sense, in a living sense, in an enjoyable sense. All heaven and heavenly things are opened to those who are prepared to enter the path of discipleship consciously in identification with the crucified Lord. Is that where we are? Is that where you are? Is that where I am?

Christ rejected, Christ slain here.

Are you prepared to take your stand [00:14:01] in the presence of the world with the rejected Christ? It's easy to do it here, here and now. Everybody in this meeting probably would say, oh yes, we take our stand with the rejected Christ. What about for those who have to do it when you go to work? What about when you face the neighbors? What about when those that you associate with make demands upon your time and upon your interests that militate against the honor and the glory of your blessed Lord? Oh, the path of discipleship is tested.

But I'm quite sure that anybody who knows anything of the blessedness of being a disciple of Christ will say it's worthwhile.

It is worthwhile.

And so here the cross is at once the demonstration of the character of this world [00:15:01] and the men who live in it. And here it's the religious men and the religious world in particular, but it's at once the demonstration of the mighty power of God.

He raised the third day, verse 23, and he said to them all, he said to them all, no exceptions in the path of discipleship, he says to them all, that's you and that's me. Even if you were converted yesterday or if you were converted 50 years ago, he said to them all, he's got one thing to say to us all and what he says to all he brings down to each individually, if any man, if anyone, any one of us will come after me.

He doesn't say if anyone will join the brethren. He doesn't say if anyone will come into the meeting. [00:16:01] He doesn't say if anyone will be religious. He says if anyone will come after me.

He will only come after someone when they're moving before you and he's opened the path. I know this is on a different line. I can't help but cite it. John 14, I am the way. Oh, he's opened the way. That way leads certainly through a rejecting world but it leads to a world where Christ is accepted. It leads to the Father's world. It leads to that blessed sphere where the divine revelation in its blessed fullness through him.

But he says if anyone will come after me.

Now this is testing, isn't it? Let him deny himself.

He doesn't say let him refuse this thing, that thing and the other thing. [00:17:02] You can't refuse anything until you deny yourself.

Let him deny himself.

The last person that you and I want to part company with is this one.

Self. There is a saying in the world that self dies not.

Ah, but listen dear brethren for you and for me as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ the truth of the cross the truth of Romans is implicit in this that we are just looking at that God has come to an end of the man of sin and shame.

He's come to an end of all that which you and I are as of a ruined Adam's stock and has expressed it in the cross of Christ. Have you and I come to an end of the man [00:18:02] that God has ended in the cross of shame. I sat in a Bible reading once on Chastisement in Hebrews 12.

And I remember a brother named James Boyd was sitting there holding forth in the Bible reading and an old Presbyterian Christian man got up and walked over to him and he said in the midst of the reading isn't it kind he says of our Heavenly Father to take into hand this awful flesh of ours to instruct it and to approve it.

James Boyd looked at him and he says God couldn't mend the flesh God has ended it in the cross of Christ. Oh well it's alright to repeat these things and say oh there's something in that. There's more than something in it. It's the end for the disciple who in the language of these verses accepts the invitation of our blessed Lord if any man will come up to me [00:19:02] let him deny himself. I like to be well thought of. I like the brethren to say he's a good speaker. I like the brethren to say he's a good expositor. Well you might like something else but you and I like to be prominent.

God likes Christ to be prominent.

And so here in this blessed verse if any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily. When I was in the Baptist church I remember we used to sing a hymn that had a sentiment in it something like this. Can't repeat it correctly by any means now. The cross which thou gavest us heavy. And it speaks of course of the trials and the cares and the sorrows of everyday life. This scripture doesn't. This scripture says at least the Lord Jesus in this scripture says let him deny himself [00:20:02] and take up his cross daily. His cross.

It doesn't say let him take up my cross.

John's gospel says Jesus bearing his cross went forth.

Here let him take up his cross.

What does it mean?

It means that the truth of Christ's rejection makes such a powerful impact upon your heart and life that you make Christ's cross your cross.

In other words you accept death with Christ. In other words you say our old man is crucified with Christ. That's the teaching of course. That's the doctrine of Romans. We accept that God has come to the end. We don't say the first man or the old man. Come to an end. The old man in the cross of Christ and is entering [00:21:02] upon the path of discipleship under the attractive and irresistible charm of our Lord Jesus Christ. You deny yourself and you make the cross yours.

And you do it daily. Or you don't say yes I remember I did that so many years, so many months ago. Oh no.

Thank God if the truth made an impact upon you very early in your Christian history, but it doesn't make the same impact today. The way us Christians spend some of our time looking back to the bright days that we used to have. Do we look back to the days in which Christ was so intrinsic to us? Do we look back to the days when we would have forsaken everything for him?

Jesus I my cross have taken all to leave and follow the people.

[00:22:06] Dear brethren, it can be true today.

The blessed word gives us the privilege of getting whatever we are.

However we have wondered or failed to go on.

You give us the opportunity today to come under the powerful impact of the truth of God and deny ourselves with a crucified Christ in relation to the world and to do it daily. Not just on a Lord's day. Not just on a good Friday in a fellowship meeting. Every day. It's easy to be a Christian on Sunday in the Christian company. It's a matter of every day in the week. Some brief reference was made today in passing to the feasts. Well even the feast of unleavened bread was a seven day matter. The whole cycle [00:23:02] of the believer's life has to be characterized by personal holiness. The feasting on the

unleavened bread. But you only feast upon the unleavened bread as the truth of the death of Jesus affects you in other words as you eat the Passover. The Passover immediately plunges us so to speak into the feast of the unleavened bread. As you read the feasts there's a period of days. Time between the very feast. There's no time between the Passover feast and the feeding on the unleavened bread. They killed the Passover. They ate the Passover on the 14th day and on the 15th day they ate the unleavened bread. In other words their lives were so affected. Their hearts were so affected by what was transected in the death of the Paschal Lamb [00:24:02] that they hurriedly responded to the exaltation of God to feed upon the unleavened bread.

Mark your dear brethren feeding on the unleavened bread while I suggest that it refers to the necessity of and the sustenance of personal holiness.

Don't forget that it goes on to say put away leaven out of your houses.

And we're going to dwell on it. You and I know that leaven speaks of that which is contrary to God and his holiness.

You and I know what there is in our houses if there is that that comes under the heading of leaven.

Put away leaven from your houses. And so here it's a daily matter. I don't dwell on any more of these verses. They're very practical. If you save your life in this world you'll lose it. [00:25:02] Because self is at the bottom of it all. But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same will save it. I just want to hurry on now to the scene on the Transfiguration Mound. If there's testing in regard to the path of discipleship there's encouragement too in regard to it.

I just want to touch a little on the thought of what encourages in the path of discipleship. Here were these disciples taken up into the mountain and he was transfigured. I'm not quoting this passage that we've read. He was transfigured before them.

What a contrast to the word the son of man must suffer, etc.

He was transfigured before them. His countenance was altered. The fashion of his countenance was altered. His raiment was white and glistening and behold there talked with him two men [00:26:02] which were Moses and Elias. I just want to emphasize this. Verse 30.

They talked with him. You notice that?

With him Christ fills the central place.

If he fills the central place of the cross, he's going to fill it in the kingdom.

And if he's going to fill it in the kingdom, it's the intention of God that he fills it now among the saints of God. With him, Moses and Elias. Moses representative of the Lord. Elias representative of the prophets.

What does it mean?

Just leaving side of Moses and Elias personally for the moment. Everything that was lost to God

under the law system. Everything that the prophets themselves may have enjoined [00:27:02] but failed to produce in their day. Everything is going to be gathered up and set forth in perfection in that blessed glorious day when Christ gets his rightful place. In other words, when Christ comes into his kingdom every thought of God in the law and in the prophets will be carried into blessed all things in Christ. He's going to gather them together in him. Not one little bit shall be lost. But here there's a preview so to speak. There's a full view of what is to be gathered up for God. And let me just say again I say, by the way I have a habit of speaking by the way. By the way Moses was buried by the Lord. In other words, Moses went through the article of death. The prophet was carried up into heaven. [00:28:02] There is a suggestion, is there not, that in that day of coming glory there will be with our blessed Lord in the day of his appearing saints who've fallen asleep and saints who lived till he came. In other words the rapture will have taken place. Sleeping saints will have been raised. Living saints will have been changed and they'll both be caught up to share together in the brightness and the glory of his coming kingdom. But just let's pass on we're going to pass by Peter. We sometimes say some things about and against Peter. But verse 34 says that while he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed them and they feared as they entered into the cloud. The cloud bespeaks the glorious presence of God. When the tabernacle was reared up and everything [00:29:02] was done as the Lord had commanded Moses the glory of the Lord came down and filled it.

And the cloud of his presence was there. And so here the cloud the symbol of the presence of God in his glory is seen again for it's seen in relation to Christ in supremacy. And we read there came a voice verse 35 out of the cloud saying this is my beloved son hear him.

He made a reference to the Christ. A brief reference this afternoon to the son of man. A brief reference this afternoon to the Lord is a brief reference to his beloved son.

This is my beloved son.

There's something beyond administration.

There's something above [00:30:02] kingdom, power and glory and Christ will fill us in certainly in the day of administration. But there's something above it. There's something beyond it. There's what he is to the father. This is my beloved son. Does your heart thrill dear brethren at the consideration of the fact that our son, our blessed Lord our son abides forever in the communion of the blessed affections and relationships of the Godhead. This is my beloved son.

What he is to the father hear him. You and I will be brought to taste something of the sweetness of those blessed divine affections flowing freely between the father and the son when we are with him in the place where he should be. Here today in the anticipation of that [00:31:02] looking back to the cross where he suffered, was rejected and was slain.

May you and I take the path of discipleship and tread it in affectionate response to him in the little while that's given to us between the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that you follow. Amen.