

Luke 9:51~56

This is a passage, in that Luke clearly declares that this was a “*turning point*” in Jesus’ ministry...

(Vs 51) ⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when **the time was come that he should be received up**, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem...*

...when **the time was come that he should be received up**... “*Received up*” is a reference to His sacrificial death on the cross. It referred to the “*offering up*” of His life, to God the Father, as a sacrificial offering for sin.

For centuries, the nation Israel had offered up to God the sacrifices of the blood of animals, for sin. Now **the time had come**, for Jesus to lay down His life on the altar (the cross), for the sins of the whole world. Unknown to the Jewish people, every single sacrifice they offered in the temple, year after year, was a shadow of things to come. Now, *the time had come*, to put an end to those sacrifices...the time had come for Him to lay down His life, as one final offering for sin. It was time for the “*Fulfilling of the Law.*”

Jesus had been telling His disciples, that this day was coming... Three times in this one chapter, we find the disciples being told of His impending death... (Vs 22, 31, 44) And now, the time had come... Luke tells us that He “*Set His face*” to go to Jerusalem... To say that He “*set His face*” to go to Jerusalem was to say that the entire direction of His ministry and purpose took a turn. It is to say from that moment on, Jesus was determined, He walked with a new purpose...the final phase of His plan had begun.

As He began His journey towards Jerusalem, He sends the disciples ahead to “*make ready for Him*”... This was a common thing for them, something they had done many times. Anytime a large group traveled together, when they had traveled about as far as they could for one day, someone one go ahead of the others into a town and find a place to stay, and make provisions for the group to eat, and so on. According to the account, this fell to James and John. Which when they tried to do just that, they were rejected! Luke tells us that when they tried to make ready for Jesus and the rest, here in the Samaritan village, they were turned away. The Samaritan’s made it clear; they didn’t want anything to do with Jesus!

(Vs 53) *Luke tells us, the reason was... ⁵³ ...because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

It was because He and His group were on their way to Jerusalem, that the Samaritans refused to have anything to do with them! Now that may seem strange to us, but if you understood the relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews, you’d realize that kind of response was normal, and to be expected.

The “*Key*” to understanding this passage, is found in understanding the relationship between the Jews and Samaritans. They hated each other! To say they were *enemies* would be an understatement. As I’ve told you before, the Jews “*Literally hated the ground the Samaritans walked on.*” An old Jewish custom was, that anytime a Jew had to travel through Samaritan own land, just prior to stepping back onto Jewish soil, they’d “*shake the dust off of their sandals.*” It was an act of contempt and judgment on the people, declaring that they didn’t even want their dirt being mixed with their Holy ground...they literally despised the ground they walked on.

Listen, it is only when you understand the hostile relationship between Jews/Gentiles, that you are able to fully appreciate and understand the “*Gospel of Christ!*” A large part of the reason that Jesus was rejected of the Jews, had to do with His dealings with the Gentiles! Most of the resentment and hatred towards Jesus from His own countrymen, stemmed from His dealings with the Samaritans, and other Gentiles! In Jewish eyes, these people were “*defiled and considered unclean.*” And any man having dealings with them, was considered unclean as well!

The fact that Jesus even “Walked” through this Samaritan village, was no doubt, hard to believe in the minds of the disciples... There was a main road, that traveled North to South through central Palestine, that went right through this Samaritan town. Most Jews took the long route that went around Samaria, for no other reason than to avoid the people. But Jesus took this road, and not only was He going to walk through their town, He had plans of staying with them!

This wasn't the first time, Jesus had been this way... He often traveled this route, as He went back and forth between Galilee and Jerusalem. On one such journey, it says that as He was traveling through Samaria, he had an encounter with a certain woman... The Story is found in John 4. Story has it that being weary, He stopped at a place where there was a well and sat down. Soon a woman came up to the well to draw some water. Jesus asked her, to give him a drink. Look at how she responded in verse 9...

(Vs 9) *⁹Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asks drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

Jesus responded by telling her that if she knew who He was, she'd ask Him for a drink, and He'd give to her “Living Water”... As they continued to talk, Jesus explained that He was talking about eternal life, and she responded saying give me this water. Jesus told her to go get her husband, and come back. She replied, she didn't have a husband. Which Jesus in turn replied, right, you've had four husbands, and the one you're living with right now is not your husband...

Realizing that He knew everything about her, she perceived He was a prophet... and thus, the subject turned to religion.

(John 4) *¹⁹The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; (Mt. Gerizim... **GEHR-uh-zim**) *and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.**

Again we see the matter of the division between the Jews and the Samaritans... pointing out that her people worshiped here on that mountain, and the Jews declared the true place of worship to be in Jerusalem! Notice what Jesus said...

*²¹Jesus saith unto her, **Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. ²⁴God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.***

Jesus is talking about the fact, that after His death, worship of God will not be limited to a building. But rather God's spirit will no longer be confined to a building, but will dwell in the hearts of men! There will be no need of buildings and priest, and sacrifices... For after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, God would walk with men, God's spirit would now dwell with the spirit of man.

(Vs 27) *But notice how the disciples reacted when they returned and saw Him talking with this woman from Samaria... ²⁷And upon this came his disciples, and marveled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seek thou? or, Why talk thou with her?*

In short, they couldn't believe He was talking with this woman! Once again, a testimony to the deep-seated animosity between the Jews and Samaritans. It becomes clear, that by the reaction of the disciples, seeing Him talking with this Samaritan woman, that had it been them, they wouldn't have talked with her.

That's only one of many instances recorded in scripture, giving us some insight to the “animosity” between these two nationalities of people. Here in Luke 9, once again we see it, with the Samaritans rejecting Jesus, and telling them they weren't welcome there! In turn, we see it just as well in James and

John, for after being rejected, they became “*furious*,” burning with rage, and asked Jesus if He’d allow them to call fire down from heaven and consume the whole village! Given the reaction of the disciples...we can see, there is yet a deep-seated animosity that is still deeply embedded in them.

The fact they referred to the account of Elijah, seems to insinuate they were *trying to justify* doing this... James and John’s reference to Elijah, calling down of fire from heaven, goes back several hundred years, to during the time of King Ahaziah’s reign over Israel. I need to clarify this, because the scriptures record two instances where Elijah called fire down from heaven. The first, was on Mount Carmel, when he was confronting the false prophets of Baal. That one took place during the reign of his father, King Ahab, somewhere around 850 B.C. In the first instance of Elijah’s calling fire down from heaven, was in challenging the false prophets of Baal, to prove who the true and living God was...

They built altars on top of Mount Carmel, and put sacrifices on them. Elijah allowed the prophets of Baal to go first, to call on their God to send fire down and consume the offering. But we are told, that in spite of their pleas, nothing happened. After some time, Elijah began to mock them, asking them if their God was “*asleep*?” Then came his turn, and prior to calling on His God, he instructed them to water down the altar, and they emptied several barrels of water all over the altar, making it humanly impossible for the wood to burn. Then Elijah called on God to send fire, and He immediately did, consuming up the entire altar, even the water in the trenches around the altar! In the end, the false prophets of Baal were slain!

The second instance recorded of Elijah calling fire down from heaven, (*and the one that James and John is referring to here*) took place during the reign of King Ahaziah, King Ahab’s son. Somewhere around his 10th year in power, he had a bad fall, out of a window or something. And the injuries he sustained were serious, they were life threatening. So much so, he sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub, (Baal) whether or not he would recover. While the messengers were on their way to Ekron, the Lord spoke to Elijah and told him to intervene with the messengers, and ask them why they were going to enquire of the god of Baal about the matter, asking them, “*Is it not because there is not a God in Israel?*” The lord told Elijah to tell the messengers, to tell the King that he was going to die, that he would never get up from his bed. (It seems to be a judgment from God for not looking to Him, but Baal.)

When the messengers returned and told the King the news, the King asked who it was that told them this, and *by the description they gave*, the King knew it was Elijah. In anger, the King sent a company of fifty men to retrieve Elijah, which in turn called down fire from Heaven, which consumed them. Hearing the news, not to be outdone, sent a company of another fifty, which resulted in the thing, Elijah calling down fire from heaven that consumed them. Finally there was a third company of fifty sent, in which the captain of the army humbled himself before Elijah, asking him to spare his men. To which Elijah obliged...and went with the men to see the King, and told him of his impending death. Declaring that the reason being, he was acting if there was no God of Israel.

It is to this event, that James and John was referring to, asking the Lord if they could do the same! The events were similar, both took place in Samaria, and both had to do with Samaria’s rejection of the one true living God! Being “*outraged*” by the way they were treated, James and John seeks the Lord’s approval to do the same thing Elijah did, but to the whole city!

(Vs 55) Jesus sternly rebukes them! ⁵⁵*But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* ⁵⁶*For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

Beloved we need to listen closely to what Jesus was teaching His disciples here, for the same is to be true in our lives as well. He reminds them, yet once again, that they are “*Embracing the wrong spirit.*” (Remember the teaching of embracing a child-like spirit). He rebukes them for the fact; they are yet *clinging* to the “*Spirit of SELF!*” Which is both a hindrance and opposition to the Spirit and Will of God!

The point Jesus is making here to the disciples, is the necessity of them denying themselves! If our aim is to follow Christ, then the first requirement is that we “*deny ourselves and take up the cross!*” At the very heart of the message of Christ, is the Cross! And the cross is all about death. Not only His death, but our death as well. So that we may carry out His will in our lives!

Here, once again, Jesus reminds the disciples, that “**THEY**” *are yet living!*

They were walking in the wrong “Spirit,” THEIR spirit... He then calls on them to “*Take up the cross*” and put “*Self to death!*” Practically speaking, that means to lay aside our “*Personal feelings,*” our “*Personal ambitions*” and “*Personal desires.*” It is literally a life of “*Putting self to death*”...so we may “*Live unto Christ!*”

(Romans 8:12~14) ¹²*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (“flesh” refers to “Self-will...Self-desires”)*

¹³**For if** *ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* ¹⁴*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, **they are the sons of God.***

This has got to be one of the “*best*” and *clearest definitions* of what it means to be a Christian, in scripture. In that it is a day-day life, of putting SELF to death. That’s what he means by “*mortify the deeds of the body,*” putting to death the selfish lust and desires that reign in our bodies!

Tragically, in our day, Christianity has been so diluted, that it has all but lost its meaning. People in our day, consider themselves “*Christians*” simply because they have attended church at some point, because they have “*joined the church,*” or the fact they “*believe the story of Jesus,*” or *participate in the activities* of the Church... But that’s not the Christian life, the Christian life is best described as Paul describes it here, that of a life of “*Dying to Self!*” Jesus came to teach us the way to the Father, and the way is the “*Way of the Cross!*”

Paul affirms the same truth Jesus taught, “*Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.*” Paul stresses that same truth here, just in a little different way...

¹³**For if** *ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* (If you continue to live after your own will and desires...you will die, but if you put them to death, to live to Christ, and His will...you shall live!

(Vs 14) ¹⁴*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

In our lesson this morning in Luke, Jesus reveals to the disciples, that the “*Will of God*” and the “*Spirit of God*” towards His enemies, is not that of anger and animosity, in wanting to destroy them! But rather, it is of compassion and mercy towards them. Beloved, God does not delight in the death of the wicked, in the death of His enemies, of those who oppose Him! To that, I for one am very grateful, for 25 years, I opposed Him, I was among those who rejected Him!

The teaching here is to “*Love our enemies*”... Jesus is calling on His disciples to “*Flesh out*” what He had been teaching them about those who oppose them. (Luke 6: 27~28) ²⁷*But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,* ²⁸*Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

Show “*Love*” to your enemies...in the form of *Mercy*... Give them what they do not deserve, grace... By doing so, you will be walking in the “*Spirit of God*”...