

Luke 9:49-62

Verses 49-50:

--Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us."

But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side."

--This interaction is also mentioned in **Mark 9:38-41**.

--It seems like John was listening to Jesus' teaching about receiving others with a humble childlike attitude, and now questions a previous interaction. Convicted, he asks Jesus about it.

--John's zeal was good, but his knowledge was not. Jesus says the true question is not whether the person is following Jesus exactly like they are, but whether they are truly **for** or **against** Jesus Christ.

--The danger here was one of exclusivism. Jesus was the center of what God was doing on the face of the earth, but not the only place or way God was working! ***Numbers 11:24-30***

--Sadly, too many who think that their version of Christianity contains the only true followers of Jesus Christ—whether Catholic, Orthodox, or various cultish Protestant churches. We need more of Paul's attitude in **Philippians 1:15-18**.

--One of Satan's tactics with zealous believers is to make them think their version of Christianity is the only real, pure, and true version of God's work on the face of the earth. I should not **forbid** anyone who is working for Jesus Christ. *This does not mean we embrace everyone who simply names the name of Jesus. Those who claim the name but not the Spirit and truth of the Word are working against Jesus Christ!*

--As an aside, denominations are fine in terms of expressions of convictions, but they become counter to the teaching of Jesus here when they become exclusive bastions of God's name and work. *I am thankful for the openness and placement of Calvary Chapel in the Body of Christ! We hold our convictions, our spiritual brotherhood, and Christ's authority as Lord to work beyond us equally.*

Verses 51-52:

--Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.

--This begins a turning point in the book of Luke. *Much of the content between **9:51** through **19:44** is unique to Luke's gospel.*

--Jesus is now beginning the journey that will take Him all the way to being **received up**, which is a unique Greek word (*analeipsis*) used only here in the NT. It means *a taking up*.

--Luke is clearly describing the future Ascension of Jesus Christ, which he ends this gospel with (**24:50-53**).

--The disciples sensed this new tone of Jesus' mission. *He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.* . . . A set face meant there were obstacles to be conquered and fortitude would be needed.

Isaiah 50:5-7: The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. "For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.

John 17:4: I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

--Since the time had come, there also seems to be a corresponding new mode of operation. Jesus is sending messengers before Himself to see who will welcome the King before His triumphal entry. *In some ways, like His disciples, we too are with Him still on this journey of humble beginnings to future glory.*

Verses 53-54:

--But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

--At this point, Jesus has the twelve and a larger contingent of disciples following Him (**10:1**). It would take some organization to find lodging for all of them.

--The disciples are rejected by the Samaritans because they didn't like helping Jews, especially religious Jews intent on traveling to Jerusalem for worship. *Little did they know, Jesus was going to be rejected in Jerusalem and crucified as the Lamb of God!*

--James and John no doubt sensed something of the importance of Jesus' journey. He was finally acting more like a King! They had a natural zealous streak as the "sons of thunder" (**Mk. 3:17**), and they had both just seen Elijah. Naturally, their minds would take them back to how God worked through their past heroes. I just want to make the point that they were not fools, but they were horribly wrong. *It is possible to be jealous for Christ in a very unholy manner!*

Verses 55-56:

--But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

--Their ignorant arguing over who would be the greatest received instruction. But this desire was worthy of public rebuke. *How this must have stung, especially if it was before the wider group of seventy disciples and whoever else was present!*

--The Old Testament lesson James and John needed here was that of Moses' sin, not Elijah's defense in the face of ungodly threats. They were misrepresenting the character and mission of Jesus Christ. *Take heart when you make a mistake in representing Christ. These were the apostles! The very foundation of the Church.*

--They would change. What do we see of John in the book of Acts?

Acts 8:25: So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

--Jesus knows how to be treated shamefully and yet respond in a godly manner. What does He do? He withdraws. He does not force Himself on the Samaritans.

Verses 57-62:

--Luke tells us these interactions take place **as they journeyed on the road**. It is about as common and unpoetic a picture as you can get. Matthew's account (**8:18-22**) of the first two men seems to be earlier chronologically, while it seems Luke adds the last account and places them all together. I am sure prospective disciples approached Jesus regularly, not merely on one or two occasions. Luke lumps together these three examples to make a certain point.

--The point is to see Jesus' interaction with people who are seeking to join Him in the daily process of life. Something in Jesus attracted all three of these men, yet there was also something that hindered each of them.

--What we see in all three cases is that Jesus loved each of these men by *demanding an immediate choice between Himself and everything else*. We don't always have time to postpone our decision to follow Jesus. Some prospective disciples flounder because they are always unsure, delaying, wondering how/why, ever insisting on doing something else first.

--Jesus dealt with each of these men differently because He knew them individually, which is also why He still deals with men differently.

John 2:24-25: But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

--Let's see how Jesus Christ dealt with them.

Verses 57-58:

--Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

--We know from Matthew (**8:19**) that the first man to approach Jesus was a scribe. To be a scribe certainly tells us something of the man's sincerity and dedication. He is no doubt religious in a most serious way—even for a Jew.

--He is also willing to sacrifice his reputation and social standing. We know there was real pressure and persecution from the religious elite. Despite the social and religious costs, he freely offers himself to Jesus. He felt like he was standing before someone he could follow anywhere.

--The words of Ruth are no doubt in his mind: ***But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."*** (Ruth 1:16-17)

--There is truly something noble here, even if the man was impulsive to some degree. To be impulsive was not all bad (Peter was following Jesus!). Still, he was immature in his desires. There was something Jesus knew that he misunderstood.

--Jesus challenges the scribe. Why? We are not sure. It is likely that the scribe would naturally blend the ideas of God's work and God's wealth—blessings and bounty—as the other twelve disciples often did. Whatever the reason, the True Sower recognized soil in the scribe's heart that would produce quick growth with shallow roots!

--Reading these words, it seems easy to feel pity for Jesus, but do not make that mistake! Jesus was simply stating a fact, not begging for sympathy. What Jesus wanted to make clear was more than the fact that He didn't have a stable home. Jesus was stating the fact that He was tethered to nothing here in this life.

*Morgan (The Great Physician, pg. 132): *"When next you quote these words as the words of Jesus, don't pity Him. He does not need your pity. Pity yourself rather if you have a home that holds you back, when Christ wants you out upon the high places of the world. That is the principle. . . He was revealing the fact that He was detached from everything that would prevent progress, and so showing to him that traveling with Him meant the taking up of a similar attitude."**

--Jesus was born in another man's stable; lived in Peter's house; used others' fishing boats; accepted the money and hospitality of women and tax collectors; rode in to Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey; had Passover dinner in a borrowed upper room; He prayed His most private and intimate prayer (a prayer of strong crying and tears) in a public garden; He was beaten, stripped naked, whipped, and crucified publicly, and was eventually buried in someone else's grave.

--Jesus lived a life of selfless detachment to what was passing but unyielding attachment to what was eternal! ***Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus!***

--Jesus knew His early followers—as many today—would be forced to live this type of life. *Just imagine the worship of this scribe in the temple to being driven into caves and persecuted!*

--In like manner, Paul charged Timothy: ***You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4).***

--At some point, Jesus Christ might call you as His disciples to give up the idea of being settled somewhere in this world as your home. Are we ready to “move” in service to our Lord? Do we hold our homes, or do they hold us? *Are we living for the HGTV American dream? Instagram Vacation lifestyle? The next beach house or lake house?*

Verses 59-60:

--***Then He said to another, “Follow Me.”***

But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”

--The second man introduces a new scenario. Matthew **(8:21)** tells us that this man was *already* a disciple. He was one of those who followed Jesus from the larger group beyond the twelve.

--Also, this man does not approach Jesus. Jesus approaches this man and directly calls him to follow. This man is being called to something more by Christ! To a greater devotion and commitment in following—to a greater nearness and communion with Him!

--His response is unique. It is likely that his father was not dead but older and in need of help. Even if his father had recently died (which seems unlikely because funerals would happen almost immediately and this man likely would have already left Jesus in that case) the process of mourning and the subsequent uncleanness would last for days or weeks **(Num. 19:11-22)**.

--Jesus does not deny family obligations, only the immediacy of those for this man. The same excuse happens in our day. Someone’s noble sense of duty and loyalty to family takes precedence over obligations to Jesus Christ.

--Our duty to our family and relatives does not excuse us from our duty to Christ.

--Even in the OT God’s priority over family was clear. It was said to the Nazarite of old:

****Numbers 6:6-8: All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.****

--Here in the NT Jesus was clear about where He was to stand in all earthly relationships:

****Matthew 10:34-37: Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace on earth but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’, and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.****

--What does Jesus say? He exhorts this man to leave earthly things to those who cannot see or do not know the awesome reality of the kingdom of God. The spiritually dead (**Eph. 2:1**) can take care of earthly things, but they cannot preach the gospel!

--Jesus is inviting the man to join Him in saving souls from eternal death. It is wonderful when family does understand the priority of Jesus' calling in a life. *Frank Drown (the pilot who found the bodies of Jim Elliot and his friends) and story of his sick father before he left for Ecuador.*

--Now, I think it is important to say that Jesus doesn't call every individual to this type of work on the *same level*, but He does call all of us to this on *some level*.

--Here again, Jesus had to live this out (Was there not pain in this for Him? Was there not incredible joy for the disciples?!)

Matthew. 12:46-50: *While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are my brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.*

--Would Jesus stretch out His hand toward us and say the same?

--This was such a critical time for Jesus and His followers! Did this man, a man called by Jesus to follow Him closer and join in His preaching ministry, miss out on the last few months of Jesus' life and ministry?

Verses 61-62:

And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."

But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

--We don't know as much about the third man. We know that he came to Jesus with an intent to follow, but just wanted to delay for a bit—maybe to get in a few good times or happy memories with his relatives.

--It is easy to find excuses to delay: I am too young/old; too weak/inexperienced/no opportunities/I'll try later, Just need to make so much money first, etc. Always something else where we say ***let me first go and...***

--This man receives Jesus' most severe warning. Jesus knows that the word to this disciple must cut right to the heart of the issue. A heroic impulse cannot rescue a divided heart.

--His look back to family and friends proves the presence of a divided heart. ***Remember Lot's wife!***

--When we look backwards our current sight and direction are off—even if it is ever so slight. There was no need or responsibility here like the previous two cases. Just a *desire* to go back, to look back, to have Jesus and something else.

--No one can plow long, straight furrows while looking back. And notice, it wasn't just a look back envying sinners and sin, but something basically good like family and friends. It wasn't *what* was being looked for that made the look back wrong, it was the fact and desire of it.

--Looking back *from Jesus* means he did not see clearly the King or His kingdom. If he did, there would be no reason at all to look back. *Like Matthew and the other disciples!*

*Matthew Henry: "*Those who begin the work of God must resolve to go on with it, or they will make nothing of it.*"*

--It is a dangerous thing to live with a divided heart. It is possible to love Him some, but still love the world more. But it is only possible for a time. Eventually one will reveal itself. . . **No man can serve two masters!** *Demas*

--We are responsible for our hearts. I should be aware of what is happening in mine. How can I find out what is truly in my heart? How can I see clearly? Through the Word of God and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Only in His light can I see myself clearly.

--But even when light comes, as is happening for this man here, I must respond accordingly.

2 Chronicles 12:14: And he did evil (Rehoboam), because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD.

--Jesus is our ultimate example even here. He was not looking back (**51**).

Ending Application:

--So what does make us fit for the kingdom of God—fit followers of Christ? What does Luke, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit want us to know?

- 1) That our progress in Christ must not be hindered because we are bound to material things.
- 2) That our ties to Christ and His kingdom are greater than all earthly ties—even family.
- 3) That true disciples cannot look back.

--Now, remember that Jesus was on His way to the cross. He was living all of this out! He wasn't saying that is the way things should be. He was saying that is the way things are.

--Also, remember that we are given no information as to the response of these men after Christ's exhortations. Their stories are done, but ours are yet to be told—there is more to their stories yet to be told if they heeded Christ, but there is nothing left if not. *They each chose Christ or the alternative*

--Finally, Matthew ends his section with these men saying: **Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him (Mt. 8:23).** . . . Are you in the boat with Jesus? Are you still journeying on the road together with Him?