

Law and Grace

Luke 9:51–56

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. 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?” 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.

Main Point

Followers of Christ should display compassion because He is compassionate.

I. Introduction

- A. Why are we so prone to quickly administer justice to others while extending grace to ourselves? What is your response when someone rejects you or your Christian faith?
- B. We recognize that God is just and holy and thus must enact His justice against the ungodly. Yet at the same time we learn that Jesus is compassionate and desires people to come to faith in Him.
- C. This text displays our tendency to swiftly condemn while forgetting that the Lord is great in His compassion and mercies which are new every morning.

II. Exposition

A. The Journey Begins (9:51–52a)

1. The Jerusalem Journey: A turning point in the book.
2. Christ “set his face”—determined to accomplish the Father’s plan. Jesus obeyed the Father to accomplish redemption for His people (cf. Matt. 1:21).
3. Journeyed south from the region of Galilee toward Jerusalem, necessarily passing through Samaria (see map). Traveling through the region of Samaria took around three days.

B. The Samaritans’ Rejection (9:52b–53)

1. Jews would regularly travel through Samaria to get to Jerusalem. However, the Samaritans hated the Jews (and *vice versa*) and despised when they wished to pass through.
2. Flavius Josephus (an ancient Jewish historian) wrote of an account in which Jewish Galileans tried to pass through Samaria and the Samaritans refused them access.

3. Jesus' messengers attempt to prepare a place for the Rabbi but the Samaritans refuse them entrance.
 - a) "They did not *receive him*" (cf. 9:48)
 - b) They misunderstood the Teacher's purpose in passing through: He was on His way to accomplish His atoning work on the cross so that those who receive Him in faith will be saved.
 - c) Those who do not receive Jesus are in peril. Those who receive Jesus receive sonship (John 1:11–13)

C. The Disciples' Condemnation (9:54)

1. James and John (the "sons of thunder") respond with a righteous zeal.
2. "Calling fire down from heaven" is an allusion to the account in 2 Kings 1:10ff concerning Elijah calling down fire from heaven on Ahab's soldiers.
3. The disciples further viewed Jesus as the conquering Messiah who would destroy His enemies (Rome, Samaritans, etc.).
4. Those who do not receive Christ are indeed condemned (see John 3:18). We can rightly conclude that God will cast judgment upon the disobedient—i.e., those who do not receive Him. There *is* coming a day in which Christ will come as Judge (Rev. 19:11–21; 20:11–15).

D. The Savior's Rebuke (9:55–56)

1. In spite of the brothers' zeal, Christ rebukes them. Why? Because Christ's mission was to save people (John 3:17). Now is the time for mercy and compassion.
2. His rebuke serves as a model for the church to remember: We are called to display a compassionate love while proclaiming a reconciling truth (2 Cor. 5:20).
 - a) Jesus spoke of Samaritans in a favorable light (e.g., the parable of the good Samaritan; Luke 10:25–37).
 - b) Jesus would eventually tell His disciples that their mission following His ascension included proclaiming the gospel message to Samaria (Acts 1:8).

III. Truths

- A. Jesus' obedience demands your obedience.
- B. Your misunderstanding of Jesus does not excuse your rejection of Him.
- C. Your Lord is gracious and thus you must be gracious.