

## 23. The Cost of Following Jesus

Luke 9:51-62

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

From verse 51 in Luke chapter nine, we see a change in emphasis in Luke's gospel. From this point on we see Jesus with one focus, to go to Jerusalem and, at the right time, to be the substitute in bearing the sins of the world. In fact, for the next ten chapters, a time span of around six months, we are told that He was on the road (Luke 9:51; 9:57; 10:1; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 18:35; 19:1). Having proved to the reader that Jesus was and is the Messiah, Luke's narrative now changes focus to Jesus training the apostles in discipleship and kingdom principles. Over the next ten chapters Luke gives us some of Jesus' best teaching in how to live the Christian life. Luke begins this change of emphasis by showing us that Jesus was resolute in His direction. He had his face set towards Jerusalem, where He knew He would die.

### Samaritan Opposition

<sup>51</sup>As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup>And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; <sup>53</sup>but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup>When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" <sup>55</sup>But Jesus turned and rebuked them, <sup>56</sup>and they went to another village.

He was unwavering and unswerving in His turning towards Jerusalem to pay the sin debt for all who will come to Him. Man could only be released from Satan's slave market of sin by a substitute who would pay the ultimate price for them, a sinless death in their place. Perhaps, too, He had in mind the places and the people that He would rescue from Satan's clutches as He visited various towns and villages on the way.

Question 1) Luke describes Jesus as being resolute in setting out to Jerusalem and the cross, to do the will of the Father. What actions of Jesus do you think Luke had in mind when describing Him as being resolute? How are we to be resolute in our pursuit of a life honoring to God?

In his description of Jesus being resolute, it is possible that Luke was describing Jesus rising early and getting everything eagerly packed up so that He may get on this last road trip to Jerusalem. There seems to be a firmness of purpose on the face of Jesus. In fact, the KJV translated verse 51 as: "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." For each of us that have received Christ, from the point you were made alive by the Spirit of Christ (John 3:3), the Christian life is a long walk such as Jesus had on the way to Jerusalem. It is the way of death to self, taking up our cross daily and experiencing life in all of its fullness. John Bunyan, in his allegorical book *Pilgrims Progress*, talks about the experiences and tests that each of us must go through on our way to heaven. These tests are designed by God to humble us and to allow us to see ourselves—for us to know what is in our heart and say no to sinful desires and choose to walk the rest of our lives in His ways. The children of Israel, after coming out of Egypt, are a type and shadow of the believer on this walk to the heavenly Jerusalem. Moses said to Israel:

<sup>2</sup>Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and *to test you in order to know what was in your heart*, whether or not you would keep his commands. <sup>3</sup>He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

God knows everything. There is nothing that we have ever done or going to do that He does not know about. He is outside of time and can see the end from the beginning. He already knows what is in your heart. The test is not so that God can see what is in your heart, it is so that you can see your own heart and desire to change in cooperation with the Spirit. The first part of change is conviction. The Spirit of God brings conviction; He shows us ourselves, and how short we fall. He then gives us grace and the power to change as we respond correctly. It is only as we see ourselves as God sees us that we desire to be different. Even though Jesus is perfect in all of His ways, as the prototype Man (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22), He must show us the way. The first test we see in this passage is the Test of Rejection. *“but the people there did not welcome him, because He was heading for Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:53). If you have ever been rejected, know that the Lord Jesus was rejected before you. In fact, it was prophesied by Isaiah more than five hundred years before, that when the Messiah came He would be rejected: *“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain”* (Isaiah 53:3).

Question 2) In John chapter 4, we saw that Christ was very successful in reaching out to the Samaritans, why at this time was He being rejected by them?

The Samaritans were descendants of Assyrian idol worshippers that had been brought to till and keep the land by the Assyrian king when Israel was deported by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:24-34). The Samaritans counted themselves as if they were Jews having a “form of godliness,” but in actuality they served their own gods. This was why Jews had such bitter enmity towards them, they saw them as racial half-breeds that were not from the stock of Abraham:

<sup>33</sup>They worshiped the LORD, *but they also served their own gods* in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought. <sup>34</sup>To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel (2 Kings 17:33-34).

There was an ongoing argument and hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews. <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans) (John 4:9). Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, tells us that Sanballat, the governor of Samaria under the Persians, the same one who opposed Nehemiah (Nehemiah 4:7-13), went over to the side of Alexander the Great who gave him permission to build a temple on Mount Gerizim in Samaria, similar to the one in Jerusalem. He built it for his son Manasseh, and made him High Priest. The Samaritans established rival worship to Jerusalem and accepted the first five books of Moses as their Bible (Josephus, Ant, Book XI). There was great controversy about whether to worship on Mount

Gerizim or on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (See John 4:20). R Kent Hughes, in his commentary, says, “During New Testament times, some Samaritans managed to sneak into the Jerusalem Temple where they strewed human bones.”<sup>1</sup> This was some time after the Jews had destroyed the Samaritan alternate temple. The hatred between the two people groups was very real. The Samaritans were refusing hospitality to Jesus and His disciples because they knew He was headed to Jerusalem to worship and to keep the Feast of the Passover there.

When the Jews in Galilee went down to Jerusalem for the 3 different feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, they always went around Samaria which increased their journey time by several hours and miles. Such was the bitter hatred between Jews and Samaritans. In the passage we are studying, Jesus made a point of reaching out to the Samaritans by deliberately going through their territory on two occasions that we know about, John 4 being the other occurrence. The first test we see for any leader or servant of Christ is to experience the test of Rejection. If we want to be conformed to the image of Christ on this road we call life, we will experience similar tests and trials just like Him. Every one of us has hidden character defects that we are unaware of until God allows us to be confronted with specific situations that demand a godly response. To expose what lies in the heart of a leader or disciple, God will allow the rejection test. Will we respond with anger and resentment like James and John did towards the Samaritans? Even though the Samaritans were clearly in the wrong regarding their beliefs, Jesus did not condone the disciple’s disdain for them, or their desire for retribution. To have God’s heart toward others is easy when there is no attack or rejection, but not so easy for us when we feel wronged.

Great growth comes to our spiritual life when we respond to the rejection test like Christ. When He was on the cross, the rulers, chief priests and teachers of the law hurled insults at Him (Matthew 27:39-44). His response was, “**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing**” (Luke 23:34). When He was in agony on the cross they came at him like wild beasts, the beast nature within the unregenerate man was revealed in those that passed by (Psalm 22:12-16). We should also expect to experience rejection at the hands of those who do not know what they are doing and why. There is a spiritual battle behind people’s actions at times, and we need to be aware of this.

Notice the resentment of James and John, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” They were alluding to Elijah twice calling down fire from heaven against 50 soldiers under the command of King Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:9-14), —they were thinking that maybe they should do the same against the Samaritan people. No wonder Jesus quickly told them off. They failed the test! All those that walk in the way of Christ must be merciful, and must have His heart of love for others. This is a principle in the kingdom of God. They were still convinced that Jesus would be an earthly king. They were waiting for that earthly kingdom to be revealed, totally missing the point.

### **The Cost of Following Jesus**

**<sup>57</sup>As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup>Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup>He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man**

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word Series, Luke Volume One*, Published in 1998 by Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL. Page 370

replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup>Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." <sup>61</sup>Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good bye to my family." <sup>62</sup>Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62).

The next of three more tests or obstacles is one of commitment. Will we totally abandon ourselves into the Lord's hands? Do you trust that in following His will, He is well able to care for you? The Lord will show us where our hearts are really at through life tests as to our commitment:

<sup>57</sup>As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>58</sup>Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head (Luke 9:57-58).

This man was probably thinking that if he followed Christ now, he would cash in when he got to Jerusalem. When a king went to battle, all those that went along with him would benefit from the spoils of war, and would get lands and property for their part in the war. Jesus quickly responded that His kingdom was different than this world's kingdoms. He would be offering no perks for following Him in this world. In fact, there would be times of opposition to disciples that they and we must endure. A fox has a hole that he could go into for security and rest, and birds of the air had the security of being above the earth in trees and nests, being able to hide from the predators that walked down below. Jesus tells the would-be follower that at times while on the road, the Son of God had no house to sleep in and slept out under the stars. Thank God if we do have a roof over our heads and the protection of locked doors, but be ready for the kingdom of God's sake, to endure all things to bring the gospel of God's love to others. The Lord was preparing them for what they would indeed experience in ministry after His death on the cross. God will give us grace for whatever we endure on the road ahead.

There are those who are drawn by the Spirit to us and want to follow what we are doing, but we must share reality with them. Living a life that is totally given over to Christ is not an easy life; there are many discomforts that are not seen by the average person. To walk with Christ means to die to self and accept that there is going to be hardship and difficulty in serving God and His people. Unfortunately, this is not a seeker-sensitive message. This is a come-and-die message, but it is reality. Jesus never made out that it was an easy life. After the rejection of the village in Samaria, it is possible that they were sleeping under the stars with rocks for pillows that night. Jesus was being quite honest and real as to what life was like for one that wholly follows Him. He did not sugar coat anything. Today it is very unpopular to talk about hardships in relation to faith in Christ. Have things really changed? Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever. I believe it is His words we need to heed and hold in our hearts. Popular trends in Christianity may come and go, but Jesus spoke the truth for our benefit.

Question 3) Can you think of ways today that Christians are facing hardship and being persecuted? In our culture, how does being a Christian affect your day to day life? What tests can you see coming to those who choose to follow Christ?

A third obstacle and test concerns distractions from loyalty to Christ:

<sup>59</sup>He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup>Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59-60).

This is a test as to loyalty. This man's first loyalty was to his father. Christ wanted to use him and his abilities and talents for His Kingdom purposes, but his heart was elsewhere. It is very possible that the man's father was not even dead yet. Jews at the time buried their dead within hours of death. If his father was dead, why would he even be on the road listening to Christ? He would be caring for the details of the funeral. It is entirely possible that the man was thinking about the future, that when his father died, the inheritance he had coming to him would see him through anything that Christ demanded. He wanted to put off following Christ to a later time. It is so easy for people to put off making a decision for Christ. Jesus was telling him that NOW is the accepted time. Satan has distracted many into procrastination by putting off committing themselves to a later time. This was exactly the mistake that the Judean governor, Felix, made towards the apostle Paul when he shared the gospel with him: "As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. **When I find it convenient, I will send for you**" (Acts 24:25).

The man Jesus was speaking to had no concept of the same urgency that beat in the heart of Christ for His Church and God's kingdom. Jesus was saying to let the spiritually dead, bury the physically dead—the most important thing is to get the gospel out to reach people before they enter a lost eternity. Precious lost people are dying daily without the knowledge of Christ. We need to have our eyes opened spiritually to the value that He has placed on each life. Each one of us will live in eternity, so if everything depends on hearing the gospel, and it does (Romans 10:14-15), then we must do all we can to reach as many as we can while it is still day. We must spend and be spent to reach the lost. Do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today. The Word of God says: "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). There is no better time than now to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

Question 4) What distractions do you find cropping up in your life that dissuade you from fully following Christ?

The next test or obstacle that is mentioned is the priority test:

<sup>61</sup>Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good bye to my family." <sup>62</sup>Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (vs. 61-62).

The call of God must come first in the life of one who has heard the Master's voice. This world and Satan's temptations and schemes will keep you from full surrender if you do not totally abandon all to the cause of Christ. Burn your bridges that are behind you! When Julius Caesar of Rome landed on the shores of England to conquer it, he had all the ships burned so that his soldiers knew that there was no going back. Baptism is a way to burn your ships. It is a statement

to the world and to the invisible forces that are the other side of the veil of this world, that you intend to completely follow Christ on the Calvary road. I have watched the tractors plowing the fields of England, they always have white sticks over the other side of the field in order that they may focus straight ahead, and thus, plough a straight furrow. We cannot plow a straight line by looking back. Forget the mistakes of the past, do not let the enemy focus you on what is behind! Remember Lot's wife, how when she looked back she became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:17, 26). Don't look back, heaven is before us, let us not be distracted by bitterness, disappointment, or the failures of the past. In every culture and in every age, come new distractions. We are to live in this world, but not be a part of the system of this world which is in opposition to Christ.

The challenge that we face every day in our Western culture is that of the media. This is a very real and potentially deceptive influence in our lives. Like many things, the media has great potential for good or for evil. If we are to be aware of the difference between God's perspective and His ways, versus the ways of this present evil age, we must know the ways of the Lord. Otherwise, we become indoctrinated by what is around us. Paul made it very clear when he stated:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16).

We are created to worship, and whether people acknowledge this or not, Paul says we are all slaves. We choose what and who we worship. Sometimes it is a conscious choice, and sometimes it is not, but the end result is the same. It does not matter. Those who have not entrusted their lives to Christ, will not find a God-less eternity, but rather will face and have to give account to the Creator. We must rather choose to be a servant to Christ, as He will treat us as His sons and daughters. If you are a believer, God has already accepted us in the beloved, and Christ's righteousness has been credited to our account. That is why I can have assurance that I am a child of His. If you choose the road of discipleship, do you think that you could ever out-give God? The Father did not even spare His own son for our sakes. The life and the rewards that await those that follow Christ will be incomparable to any suffering we may have to endure along the road. On top of that, we have the honor of walking with Jesus, following him day by day, knowing peace and joy that many never experience on earth, no matter what goods and possessions they acquire in this lifetime.

Prayer: Thank you Father, that you have called us your sons and daughters. You know everything about the path that lies ahead for each one of us. You are in control of the number of our days. Your grace is sufficient for us for each day! Give us the strength, joy, peace and wisdom we need to follow you with our whole hearts, and we will give you all the glory. Amen.

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Who Were the Samaritans and why were they  
hated by Jews?

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**Samaritans and vice versa? Why was Jesus rejected by them as He passed through? Why wasn't Christ more encouraging to the man that wanted to follow Christ, but first go and bury his father? What was that all about? Questions, questions...I believe you will find some answers in this Bible study on the Cost of Following Jesus. Click on the button below for the study.**

**We are going passage by passage through the Gospel of Luke, looking up close to the things Jesus said and taught. This class is being taught every Wednesday at Vineyard Community Church, Springdale, Ohio. We are in the Banquet Room up the hill from the main part of the church, alongside the Chapel. Class starts at 7pm. All are welcome.**

**I am writing these Bible studies as a resource for people to learn and study the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We also are translating Bible studies into Chinese Mandarin, traditional and Simplified, Arabic and also now the Indian Hindi language. Our goal is to keep the commandment of Jesus and "teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19 KJV), offering them as free downloads on our website. If any of you can help us with the cost of translation, we would greatly appreciate any help of whatever amount. All financial gifts are tax-deductible. You can give via credit or debit card on the RHS of the homepage at: [www.groupbiblestudy.com](http://www.groupbiblestudy.com)**

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