

Message #44

Luke 9:49-56

One of the great privileges I had when I used to travel as sales manager was to eat in some nice restaurants. The company expected me now and then to take various clients to eat wherever they wanted to go, either for lunch or supper.

One of the best restaurants I ever ate in was in Manhattan. It was a highly-rated Italian restaurant. The owner of the bookstore picked it so I took him and his manager to dinner. The restaurant was so famous that the walls were lined with pictures of famous actors, actresses, athletes and politicians who had eaten there.

There were three things that stood out about this place in my mind:

- 1) The quality of Italian food; it was the best in New York;
- 2) The atmosphere; it was clean and comfortable;
- 3) The staff and service; it was truly first class.

From the time you walked into this place until the time you left, you were treated with the utmost respect. You felt wanted and appreciated. The philosophy of this restaurant was our customers are our most important asset, therefore treat everyone special.

Now the client who chose this restaurant told me that the people who work here are expected to think like, act like and look like an employee of this restaurant. In other words, all employees were to have right attitudes and actions and reactions. He knew some of the people who worked at that restaurant and he said if you do not meet the criteria, you were gone.

Those of us who know Jesus Christ have the privilege of living for Him, representing Him and working for Him. If we are going to be a quality representative, according to His standards, we must follow His Word and do things His way. Things are not to be done our way, but His way. This is true for us and this was true for His disciples when He was here on earth.

Jesus Christ was not impressed with the way His disciples thought ministry ought to work. He was focused on getting them to function His way. What the disciples learn here and what we learn here is this:

THOSE WHO REPRESENT JESUS CHRIST MUST LEARN TO RELATE, REACT AND MINISTER TO OTHERS IN CHRISTOLOGICAL WAYS THAT LINE UP WITH GOD'S WORD AND PROGRAM.

Luke talked to eyewitnesses to get this data. The data he presents in Luke 9 shows that Jesus Christ really worked on challenging and rebuking His disciples:

- 1) He challenged them to a high level of commitment (9:23-26).
- 2) He rebuked them for their lack of power (9:40-41).
- 3) He instructed them to true discipleship greatness (9:46-48).

He wanted this team of His to look like and act like His team. In this text, Jesus instructs His disciples in two more areas of ministry:

AREA OF MINISTRY #1 – Christ instructs His disciples against being a sectarian. **9:49-50**

We may remember that Jesus had challenged His disciples to truth about greatness. The response of John appears to be in light of that previous discussion. John was moved to tell Jesus Christ a story of a man they had hindered from following Christ.

Apparently, John was convicted by the message that Christ gave that disciples should receive people and draw people to Christ. Richard Lenski, the Lutheran scholar of the 1800's, said that John probably wondered whether or not they had done the right thing in regard to that man (*Luke*, p. 849).

If this is what prompted John, we do see here that he had a very sensitive and honest heart and mind to the Word of God. When he heard something that convicted him, he wanted to do something about it.

Apparently, some of the Apostles saw a man who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus Christ. The Apostles attempted to stop him because he was not following them. The Imperfect tense of the verb “prevent” indicates they continually had tried to stop him multiple times. In other words, this man was not accompanying the rest of the disciples in their travels and journeys so they wanted to put a stop to what he was doing.

Now just when and where this man hooked up with Jesus Christ and received this power we don't know. What we do know is that there were more than just twelve disciples (Luke 6:13; 10:1). We suspect that he was one who closely followed Jesus Christ and he obviously had a true perspective of the Person and work of Jesus Christ and he believed in Him. In contrast to the twelve who could not cast out certain demons because of their lack of faith (9:40-41), this disciple totally and completely believed in Christ and was getting the job done.

When Jesus Christ was physically here on earth, there was a tremendous increase in demonic activity. During the days when Christ was here, there were two types of exorcists:
(**Type #1**) - Those who were false disciples. Matt. 7:22; Acts 19:13-16
(**Type #2**) - Those who were true disciples. **Luke 9:49**

Both groups were using the name of Jesus Christ to cast out the demon, but one group was a fraud and the other was for real.

Now the word that John uses in **verse 49**, “prevent” (κωλυω) is the same word Jesus uses in **verse 50** where it is translated “hinder.” The word literally means to forbid and restrain and prevent someone from doing something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 262).

These disciples did everything they could to stifle this man's ministry, being fully convinced that their actions were correct based on the fact that he was not following them. The Greek text is emphatic in that they stress he was not one of them. He was not part of their group.

Now Jesus responded to these disciples.

Response #1 - It is wrong to hinder a true disciple's ministry. **9:50a**

The particular tense and mood of the verb, "Do not hinder" is present/imperative with a negative which means "I am commanding you to stop hindering this man." The action was in progress and it needed to be stopped.

Jesus wanted His disciples to know that His ministry was not exclusive to just them. Jesus had put His hand on others and they, too, were doing a legitimate work for Him.

Response #2 - It is right to realize those not against us are for us. **9:50b**

Now Jesus makes a very important point and that is if they are not against you, they are for you. Mark uses the pronoun "us" (Mark 9:40) and Luke uses the pronoun "you."

A critical factor, then, in determining whether or not this is a true disciple was whether or not he was for or against Jesus Christ and His disciples. The Apostle John never forgot this principle and referred to it often (I John 2:9-11; 3:14-15, 23-24; 4:7, 20-21).

You can tell whether or not one is right with Jesus Christ by the way they relate to others who are right with Jesus Christ and love the Word of God. If people love the Lord and love them, they are for them. If they don't they are against them.

It is one thing to say I am doing something in the name of Jesus Christ. **It is quite another to say I am doing something in the name of Jesus Christ that is perfectly consistent with the Word of God and other true disciples of Jesus Christ.** The Apostle Paul realized this very point in his own life and ministry (Phil. 1:15; I Cor. 3:5-9). There were some who were preaching and teaching from wrong motives, but some were preaching from right motives. There was a difference.

These disciples had become very narrow in their perspective of ministry. Frankly, this can be a danger for any of us. It can be for us as individuals and it certainly may be in various denominations. They become their own exclusive group, who truly believes they have figured it all out. Their exclusivity type of thinking has actually hindered God's Word instead of promoting it. Their views are not based on a true understanding of God's Word and their religious bigotry is not Biblical.

There are times when disciples should stand against someone, but not against the one who is faithfully supportive of God's Word and God's servants. Any person, who is faithfully proclaiming God's Word and is faithfully feeding their flock, is our friend and not our enemy.

Certainly disciples will be protective of their flocks. In fact, Paul warned the elders to be very protective (i.e. Acts 20:28). But when a disciple discovers that someone is ministering God's truth and is supportive of and submissive to proper Biblical authority, that one should not be hindered.

There is no question that a narrow-minded, sectarian bigotry has hindered many people from serving God:

- 1) People have been hindered from serving God because of the color of their skin.
- 2) People have been hindered from serving God because of some previous sin.
- 3) People have been hindered from serving God because of not being in the denomination.
- 4) People have been hindered from serving God because of their version of the Bible.

Sometime good, godly people are prevented from serving because of sectarian thinking. Jesus said stop it. Stop hindering people who have a true ministry from serving the Lord.

AREA OF MINISTRY #2 – Christ instructs His disciples against being destructive. 9:51-56

Verse 51 informs us that it was nearing the time for Jesus Christ to head to Calvary. It is important to see that the time was near for "His ascension." This is clearly a reference to the resurrection and ascension. So Christ was going to die, but He would also be raised and ascend back into heaven.

It was at this point that He began to completely focus Himself on going to Jerusalem to die on the cross and accomplish this. This is a critical matter because Jesus Christ is totally focused on His sacrificial work, which awaits Him in Jerusalem. **The entire redemptive program of God for Israel and for the world is contingent upon Him going to Jerusalem.**

Verse 52 informs us that He sent His disciples ahead to make "arrangements" for Him. Christ was on His way to the cross and while traveling, both He and His disciples still needed food, drink and sleep. So He sent His disciples ahead of Him to make arrangements for Him and all those with Him.

Now initially His disciples entered a village of the Samaritans (**v. 52b-53**), but they refused to receive Him and His entourage because He was on His way to Jerusalem (**v. 54**). Luke mentions the Samaritans in three passages and this is the only one that is negative (10:33; 17:16).

The Samaritan town or village is not named. There is a point to see here. If one rejects Jesus Christ, they will end up in obscurity. The fact is all nations rejected Jesus Christ (Acts 4:24-29).

Obviously, the disciples had told them they were going to Jerusalem and probably these Samaritans thought the Kingdom will be established there. There was bad blood between the Jews and Samaritans. In fact, they hated each other. The Samaritans were a mixture of Jew/Gentile pedigree. They lived in northern Israel and the Jews despised them.

The prejudicial hatred had reached such intensity that they would not accept a Messiah whose headquarters was going to be in Jerusalem and they did not want a large group of Jews to be in their city. So they rejected the opportunity to have Jesus Christ in their city and lives.

According to **verse 54**, when James and John learned of this reaction of the Samaritans, they thought it would be well to call down fire from heaven and destroy the city. They realized that they did have supernatural power that He had authorized and they were prepared to use it to destroy this city. More than likely James and John, having seen Elijah at the transfiguration (9:30), thought of the time he once destroyed Samaritans by calling down fire from heaven (II Kings 1:3-12).

Apparently this was the time when both James and John felt that it was time to do what Elijah did, specifically call fire down from heaven and destroy these Samaritans. They did not have any idea to reach out to the Samaritans, but they had hearts like Jonah who wanted to destroy Nineveh.

James and John came up with a new method of evangelism; if people don't want Jesus Christ and if they don't want you or accept you or your message, then execute them. These disciples did have power to pray destructive, executionary types of judgments on people (Acts 5:9; I Cor. 5:5; I John 5:16). They thought this is one of those times.

Now it is clear that these two were really loyal to Jesus Christ. When these Samaritans rejected Jesus Christ, they were angry. It does make us upset at times when this world rejects Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

Now Jesus Christ was not impressed with their suggestion. According to **verse 55**, He turned to them and He rebuked them and He specifically said you do not know what kind of spirit you are of. This action would be totally contrary to the will of God at the present time.

In other words, these disciples were totally out of step with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God and program of God for now.

These disciples were totally convinced that the Kingdom of God was about to be established and it was time to destroy anyone or anything that got in their way.

The truth is, these things will happen for Israel. God will eventually destroy Israel-hating, Christ-rejecting, God-mocking nations and He will establish His kingdom and reign. We clearly see that in many prophetic passages and in the book of Revelation. But before He would reign, He had to die on the cross.

Jesus Christ is informing His disciples that He came the first time to save men, not destroy them (9:56). Do we understand what Jesus Christ is saying here? **The responsibility of the believer at this present time is to reach out to people and tell them that Jesus Christ can save them.**

Our responsibility is to share with people the good news that Jesus Christ died on that cross to save sinners and we are all sinners. Our job is to try and reach sinners, not destroy them. **Ours is not the ministry of destruction, it is a message of deliverance.**

Verse 56 says they went to another village, which means another of a different kind of village. It may have been another Samaritan village, different in respect that it permitted Christ and His team to stay in it.