

Luke 4:22-30 Sovereign Grace Incites Human Wrath

The sovereign grace of God proclaimed by Jesus incites the wrath of unbelievers and seeks out unlikely beneficiaries.

- 1) Jesus' words of grace astonish the people (4:22).
 - a) "And they all spoke well of Him"—is literally "and they testified about Him". ESV interprets "testified" in positive sense, because in Luke-Acts the word usually refers to believer's testimony about Jesus, which is positive. Others interpret as "testify against," which is possible, due to the negative reaction to Jesus in the following verses. The phrase may be intentionally open to interpretation because there was no consensus initially, just a lot of conversation regarding Jesus' claims.
 - b) "And marveled at the gracious words coming from His mouth"—Marveling is never confused with faith in Luke. It merely indicates that they were astonished by things that He said, not that they understood or agreed with them. "Gracious words" is better translated "words about grace," referring to the message of grace that Jesus expounded from Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:18).
 - c) "Is not this Joseph's son?"—This is not an insult, but neither is it a neutral statement. According to cultural custom Jesus' authority would be limited to His sphere of expertise, which, as Joseph's son, would be building. It is a skeptical challenge to His right to make such audacious claims as He does in verse 21.
- 2) Jesus voices their skepticism (4:23).
 - a) "Doubtless you will quote to Me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.'—Jesus knows their thoughts, and give them expression. They have just reduced Jesus to "Joseph's son," which we know from the earlier narratives is woefully inadequate for understanding Jesus. So, they are in essence saying, "You promise so much to have achieved so little. How is a rather ordinary fellow like You going to effect such great change in society? Elevate Yourself; then maybe we will take You seriously when You speak of elevating others."
 - b) "What we have heard You did at Capernaum, do hear in Your hometown?"—They want signs and wonders to confirm His words. They will not receive them by faith.
- 3) Jesus responds to their skepticism (4:24-27).
 - a) "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his home town."—Their skepticism places Him in the good company of true prophets like Elijah and Elisha (cf. Luke 13:34).
 - b) They will miss out on the "healing" because of unbelief (vv. 25-27).
 - c) Others (Gentiles) will experience the "healing" because of God's sovereign grace (vv. 25-27): the widow of Zarephath in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian. This anticipates the Gentile mission of the Apostles (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).
- 4) Jesus' words of sovereign grace enrage the people (4:28-29).
 - a) "When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath."—They heard the message of God's discriminating grace to leave them in their unbelief while going after others that they considered outside the boundaries of God's favor. "Filled with wrath" is in an emphatic position to underscore their hatred of the sovereign grace that Jesus proclaims.
 - b) "And they rose up . . . so that they could throw Him down the cliff."—They were in a murderous rage. Casting Him down the cliff might have been a prelude to stoning. However, He had not been properly tried, so this was less of an execution and more of a murderous rage.
- 5) Jesus passes through them without harm. Yet, this early incident in Galilee anticipates the reaction to His words of grace in Judea and Jerusalem, which leads to His crucifixion, where His words of grace will be proclaimed fully and finally—"Truly, I say to you (a criminal), today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).