

# CHAPTER 9

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The commission Christ gave to his twelve apostles to go out for some time to preach the gospel, and confirm it by miracles (v. 1-6).
- II.** Herod's terror at the growing greatness of our Lord Jesus (v. 7-9).
- III.** The apostles' return to Christ, his retirement with them into a place of solitude, the great resort of people to them notwithstanding, and his feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes (v. 10-17).
- IV.** His discourse with his disciples concerning himself and his own sufferings for them, and their for him (v. 18-27).
- V.** Christ's transfiguration (v. 28-36).
- VI.** The cure of a lunatic child (v. 37-42).
- VII.** The repeated notice Christ gave his disciples of his approaching sufferings (v. 43-45).
- VIII.** His check to the ambition of his disciples (v. 46-68), and to their monopolizing the power over devils to themselves (v. 49, 50).
- IX.** The rebuke he gave them for an over-due resentment of an affront given him by a village of the Samaritans (v. 51-56).
- X.** The answers he gave to several that were inclined to follow him, but not considerably, or not zealously and heartily, so inclined (v. 57-62).

## ◀▶ LUKE 9:1-9

### THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

We have here, I. The method Christ took to spread his gospel, to diffuse and enforce the light of it. He had *himself* travelled about, preaching and healing; but he could be only in one place at a time, and therefore now he

sent his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were pretty well instructed in the nature of the present dispensation, and able to instruct others and *deliver to them* what they had *received from the Lord*. Let them disperse themselves, some one way and some another, to *preach the kingdom of God*, as it was now about to be set up by the Messiah, to make people acquainted with the spiritual nature and tendency of it, and to persuade them to come into the interests and measures of it. For the confirming of their doctrine, because it was new and surprising, and very different from what they had been taught by the scribes and Pharisees, and because so much depended upon men's receiving, or not receiving it, he empowered them to work miracles (v. 1, 2): He *gave them authority over all devils*, to dispossess them, and cast them out, though ever so numerous, so subtle, so fierce, so obstinate. Christ designed a total rout and ruin to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore gave them power over *all devils*. He authorized and appointed them likewise to *cure disease*, and to *heal the sick*, which would make them welcome wherever they came, and not only convince people's judgments, but gain their affections. This was their commission. Now observe,

**1.** What Christ directed them to do, in prosecution of this commission at this time, when they were not to *go far* or be *out long*.

**(1.)** They must not be solicitous to recommend themselves to people's esteem by their outward appearance. Now that they begin to set up for themselves, they must have no dress, nor study to make any other figure than what they made while they followed him: they must *go as they were*, and not change their clothes, or so much as put on a pair of new shoes.

**(2.)** They must depend upon Providence, and the kindness of their friends, to furnish them with what was convenient for them. They must not take with them *either bread or money*, and yet believe they should not want. Christ would not have his disciples *shy* of receiving the kindnesses of their friends, but rather to *expect* them. Yet St. Paul saw cause not to go by this rule, when he *laboured with his hands* rather than be burdensome.

**(3.)** They must not change their lodgings, as suspecting that those who entertained them were *weary* of them; they have no reason to be so, for the ark is a guest that always pays well for its entertainment: "*Whatsoever house ye enter into there abide* (v. 4), that people may know where to find you, that your friends may know you are not backward to *serve* them, and your enemies may know you are not ashamed nor afraid to *face* them;

*there abide till you depart out of that city; stay with those you are used to.”*


**(4.)** They must put on authority, and speak *warning* to those who *refused* them as well as comfort to those that *received* them, v. 5. “If there be any place that will not entertain you, if the magistrates deny you admission and threaten to treat you as vagrants, leave them, do not force yourselves upon them, nor run yourselves into danger among them, but at the same time bind them over to the judgment of God for it; *shake off the dust of your feet* for a *testimony against them.*” This will, as it were, be produced in evidence against them, that the messengers of the gospel had been among them, to make them a fair offer of grace and peace, for this dust they left behind there; so that when they perish at last in their infidelity this will lay and leave their blood upon their own heads. *Shake off the dust of your feet,* as much as to say you abandon their city, and will have no more to do with them.

**2.** What they did, in prosecution of this commission (v. 6): *They departed* from their Master's presence; yet, having still his spiritual presence with them, his *eye* and his *arm* going along with them, and, thus borne up in their work, they *went through the towns*, some or other of them, all the towns within the circuit appointed them, *preaching the gospel, and healing every where.* Their work was the same with their Master's, doing good both to souls and bodies.

**II.** We have here Herod's perplexity and vexation at this. The communicating of Christ's power to those who were sent forth in his name, and acted by authority from him, was an *amazing* and *convincing* proof of his being the Messiah, above any thing else; that he could not only work miracles *himself*, but empower others to work miracles too, this spread his fame more than any thing, and made the rays of this *Sun of righteousness* the stronger by the *reflection* of them even from *the earth*, from such mean illiterate men as the apostles were, who had nothing else to recommend them, or to raise any expectations from them, but that *they had been with Jesus*, ~~Acts~~ Acts 4:13. When the country sees such as these *healing the sick* in the name of Jesus it gives it an alarm. Now observe,

**1.** The *various speculations* it raised among the *people*, who, though they thought not *rightly*, yet could not but think *honourably*, of our Lord Jesus, and that he was an extraordinary person, one come from the other world;

that either John Baptist, who was lately persecuted and slain for the cause of God, or *one of the old prophets*, that had been persecuted and slain long since in that cause, was *risen again*, to be recompensed for his sufferings by this honour put upon him; or that Elias, who was taken alive to heaven in a fiery chariot, *had appeared* as an express from heaven, v. 7, 8.

**2.** The *great perplexity* it created in the mind of Herod: *When he had heard of all that was done* by Christ, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he was ready to conclude with them that *John was risen from the dead*. He thought he had got clear of John, and should never be troubled with him any more, but, it seems, he is mistaken; either John is come to life again or here is another in his spirit and power, for God will never *leave himself without witness*. “What shall I do now?” saith Herod. “John *have I beheaded, but who is this?* Is he carrying on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he does not; *John did no miracle*, but he does, and therefore appears more formidable than John.” Note, Those who oppose God will find themselves more and more *embarrassed*. However, he *desired to see him*, whether he resembled John or no; but he might soon have been put out of this pain if he would but have informed himself of that which thousands knew, that Jesus preached, and wrought miracles, a great while before John was beheaded, and therefore could not be John raised from the dead. He *desired to see him*; and why did he not go and see him? Probably, because he thought it *below him* either to go to him or to send for him; he had enough of John Baptist, and cared not for having to do with any more such reprovers of sin. He desired to see him, but we do not find that ever he did, till he saw him at his bar, and then *he and his men of war set him at nought*,  Luke 23:11. Had he prosecuted his convictions now, and gone to see him, who knows but a happy change might have ben wrought in him? But, delaying it now, his heart was hardened, and when he did see him he was as much prejudiced against him as any other.

## LUKE 9:10-17

### THE MULTITUDE MIRACULOUSLY FED

We have here,

**I.** The account which the twelve gave their Master of the success of their ministry. They were not long out; but, *when they returned, they told him all that they had done*, as became servants who were sent on an errand. They told him *what they had done*, that, if they had done any thing amiss, they might mend it next time.

**II.** Their *retirement*, for a little *breathing*: He *took them, and went aside privately into a desert place*, that they might have some relaxation from business and not be always upon the stretch. Note, He that hath appointed our man-servant and maid-servant to rest would have his servants to rest too. Those in the most public stations, and that are most publicly useful, must sometimes go aside privately, both for the repose of their bodies, to recruit them, and for the furnishing of their minds by meditation for further public work.

**III.** The *resort* of the people to him, and the kind *reception* he gave them. They *followed* him, though it was into a *desert place*; for that is no desert where Christ is. And, though they hereby disturbed the repose he designed here for himself and his disciples, yet he *welcomed* them, v. 11. Note, Pious zeal may excuse a little rudeness; it did with Christ, and should with us. Though they came unseasonably, yet Christ gave them what they came for.

**1.** He *spoke unto them of the kingdom of God*, the laws of that kingdom with which they must be bound, and the privileges of that kingdom with which they might be blessed.

**2.** He *healed them that had need of healing*, and, in a sense of their need, made their application to him. Though the disease was ever so inveterate, and incurable by the physicians, though the patients were ever so poor and mean, yet Christ *healed them*. There is healing in Christ for all that *need it*, whether for soul or body. Christ hath still a power over bodily diseases, and heals his people that *need healing*. Sometimes he sees that we need the *sickness* for the good of our souls, more than the *healing* for the ease of our bodies, and then we must be willing *for a season*, because *there is need*, to be in *heaviness*; but, when he sees that we *need healing*, we shall have it. Death is his servant, to heal the saints of *all diseases*. He heals spiritual maladies by his graces, by his comforts, and has for each what the case calls for; relief for every exigence.

**IV.** The plentiful provision Christ made for the multitude that attended him. With *five loaves* of bread, and *two fishes*, he fed *five thousand men*. This narrative we had twice before, and shall meet with it again; it is the only miracle of our Saviour's that is recorded by all the four evangelists. Let us only observe out of it,

**1.** Those who diligently attend upon Christ in the way of duty, and therein deny or expose themselves, or are made to forget themselves and their outward conveniences by their zeal for God's house, are taken under his particular care, and may depend upon *Jehovah-jireh* — *The Lord will provide*. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing.

**2.** Our Lord Jesus was of a free and generous spirit. His disciples said, *Send them away, that they may get victuals*; but Christ said, “No, *give ye them to eat*; let what we have go as far as it will reach, and they are welcome to it.” Thus he has taught both ministers and Christians to *use hospitality without grudging*, ~~and~~ 1 Peter 4:9. Those that have but a little, let them do what they can with that little, and that is the way to make it more. *There is that scatters, and yet increases*.

**3.** Jesus Christ has not only physic, but food, for all those that by faith apply themselves to him; he not only *heals them that need healing*, cures the diseases of the soul, but feeds them too that need feeding, supports the spiritual life, relieves the necessities of it, and satisfies the desires of it. Christ has provided not only to save the soul from perishing by its diseases, but to nourish the soul unto life eternal, and strengthen it for all spiritual exercises.

**4.** All the gifts of Christ are to be received by the church in a regular orderly manner; *Make them sit down by fifties in a company*, v. 14. Notice is here taken of the number of each company which Christ appointed for the better distribution of the meat and the easier computation of the number of the guests.

**5.** When we are receiving our creature-comforts, we must *look up to heaven*. Christ did so, to teach us to do so. We must acknowledge that we receive them from God, and that we are unworthy to receive them, — that we owe them all, and all the comfort we have in them, to the mediation of Christ, by whom the curse is removed, and the covenant of peace settled,

— that we depend upon God's blessing upon them to make them serviceable to us, and desire that blessing.

**6.** The blessing of Christ will make a little go a great way. The *little that the righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox.*

**7.** Those whom Christ *feeds* he *fills*; to whom he gives, he gives enough; as there is in him enough for *all*, so there is enough for *each*. He replenishes every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the *goodness of his house*. Here were *fragments taken up*, to assure us that in our Father's house there is *bread enough, and to spare*. We are not straitened, or stinted, in him.

## ~~408~~ LUKE 9:18-27

### SELF-DENIAL ENJOINED

In these verses, we have Christ discoursing with his disciples about the great things that *pertained to the kingdom of God*; and one circumstance of this discourse is taken notice of here which we had not in the other evangelists — that Christ was *alone praying*, and his *disciples with him*, when he entered into this discourse, v. 18. Observe,

**1.** Though Christ had much public work to do, yet he found some time to be *alone* in private, for converse with himself, with his Father, and with his disciples.

**2.** When Christ was alone he was *praying*. It is good for us to improve our solitude for devotion, that, *when we are alone*, we may *not be alone*, but may have *the Father with us*.

**3.** When Christ was alone, praying, his *disciples were with him*, to join with him in his prayer; so that this was a family-prayer. Housekeepers ought to pray with their households, parents with their children, masters with their servants, teachers and tutors with their scholars and pupils.

**4.** Christ *prayed* with them before he *examined* them, that they might be directed and encouraged to answer him, by his prayers for them. Those we

give instructions to we should put up prayers for and with. He discourses with them,

**I.** Concerning himself; and enquires,

**1.** What *the people* said of him: *Who say the people that I am?* Christ knew better than they did, but would have his disciples made sensible, by the mistakes of others concerning him, how happy they were that were led into the knowledge of him and of the truth concerning him. We should take notice of the ignorance and errors of others, that we may be the more thankful to him who has *manifested himself to us, and not unto the world*, and may *pity* them, and do what we can to help them and to teach them better. They tell him what conjectures concerning him they had heard in their converse with the common people. Ministers would know better how to suit their instructions, reproofs, and counsels, to the case of ordinary people, if they did but converse more frequently and familiarly with them; they would then be the better able to say what is proper to rectify their notions, correct their irregularities, and remove their prejudices. The more conversant the physician is with his patient, the better he knows what to do for him. Some said that he was John Baptist, who was beheaded but the other day; others Elias, or *one of the old prophets*; any thing but what he was.

**2.** What *they* said of him. “Now see what an advantage you have by your discipleship; you know better.” “So we do,” saith Peter, “thanks be to our Master for it; we know that thou art *the Christ of God, the Anointed of God, the Messiah* promised.” It is matter of unspeakable comfort to us that our Lord Jesus is *God's anointed*, for then he has unquestionable authority and ability for his undertaking; for his being *anointed* signifies his being both appointed to it and qualified for it. Now one would have expected that Christ should have charged his disciples, who were so fully apprized and assured of this truth, to publish it to every one they met with; but no, he *strictly charged them to tell no man that thing* as yet, because there is a time for all things. After his resurrection, which completed the proof of it, Peter made the temple ring of it, that *God had made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ* (~~418~~ Acts 2:36); but as yet the evidence was not ready to be summed up, and therefore it must be concealed; while it was so, we may conclude that the belief of it was not necessary to salvation.



**II.** Concerning his own *sufferings* and *death*, of which he had yet said little. Now that his disciples were well established in the belief of his being the Christ, and able to bear it, he speaks of them expressly, and with great assurance, v. 22. It comes in as a reason why they must not yet preach that he was *the Christ*, because the wonders that would attend his death and resurrection would be the most convincing proof of his being *the Christ of God*. It was by his *exaltation* to the *right hand of the Father* that he was fully declared to be *the Christ*, and by the sending of the Spirit thereupon (~~4EB~~ Acts 2:33); and therefore wait till that is done.

**III.** Concerning their sufferings for him. So far must they be from thinking how to *prevent* his sufferings that they must rather prepare for their own.

**1.** We must *accustom* ourselves to all instances of *self-denial* and *patience*, v. 23. This is the best preparative for martyrdom. We must live a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; we must not indulge our ease and appetite, for then it will be hard to bear toil, and weariness, and want, for Christ. We are *daily* subject to affliction, and we must *accommodate* ourselves to it, and *acquiesce* in the will of God in it, and must learn to endure hardship. We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty; and, though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must *take them up*, carry them after Christ, and make the best of them.

**2.** We must *prefer the salvation and happiness of our souls* before any *secular concern* whatsoever. Reckon upon it,

**(1.)** That he who to preserve his liberty or estate, his power or preferment, nay, or to save his life, denies Christ and his truths, wilfully wrongs his conscience, and sins against God, will be, not only not a *saver*, but an unspeakable *loser*, in the issue, when *profit* and *loss* come to be balanced: *He that will save his life upon these terms will lose it*, will lose that which is of infinitely more value, his precious soul.

**(2.)** We must firmly believe also that, if we lose our life for cleaving to Christ and our religion, we shall *save* it to our unspeakable advantage; for we shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when we shall have it again a new and an eternal life.

(3.) That the gain of all the world, if we should forsake Christ, and fall in with the interests of the world, would be so far from countervailing the eternal loss and ruin of the soul that it would bear no manner of proportion to it, v. 25. If we could be supposed to gain all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in the world, by denying Christ, yet when, by *so doing*, we *lose ourselves* to all eternity, and are *cast away* at last, what good will our worldly gain do us? Observe, In Matthew and Mark the dreadful issue is a man's *losing his own soul*, here it is *losing himself*, which plainly intimates that *our souls* are *ourselves*. *Animus cujusque is est quisque* — *The soul is the man*; and it is well or ill with us according as it is well or ill with our souls. If they perish for ever, under the weight of their own guilt and corruption, it is certain that *we* are undone. The body cannot be happy if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy though the body be greatly afflicted and oppressed in this world. If a man be himself *cast away*, *e zemiotheis* — *if he be damaged*, — or if he be punished, *si mulctetur* — *if he have a mulct put upon his soul* by the righteous sentence of Christ, whose cause and interest he has treacherously deserted, — if it be adjudged a forfeiture of all his blessedness, and the forfeiture be taken, where is his gain? What is his hope?

3. We must therefore *never be ashamed* of Christ and his gospel, nor of any disgrace or reproach that we may undergo for our faithful adherence to him and it, v. 26. *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed*, and justly. When the service and honour of Christ called for his testimony and agency, he denied them, because the interest *of Christ* was a *despised* interest, and *every where spoken against*; and therefore he can expect no other than that in the great day, when his case calls for Christ's appearance on his behalf, Christ will be ashamed to own such a cowardly, worldly, sneaking spirit, and will say, "He is none of mine; he belongs not to me." As Christ had a state of *humiliation* and of *exaltation*, so likewise has his cause. They, and they only, that are willing to suffer with it when it suffers, shall reign with it when it reigns; but those that cannot find in their hearts to share with it in its *disgrace*, and to say, *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*, shall certainly have no share with it in its *triumphs*. Observe here, How Christ, to support himself and his followers under present disgraces, speaks *magnificently* of the lustre of his second coming, in prospect of which he *endured the cross, despising the shame*.

(1.) He shall come *in his own glory*. This was not mentioned in Matthew and Mark. He shall come in the glory of the Mediator, *all the glory* which the Father *restored to him*, which he had with God before the worlds were, which he had *deposited* and *put in pledge*, as it were, for the accomplishing of his undertaking, and demanded again when he had gone through it. *Now, O Father, glorify thou me,* ~~John~~ John 17:4, 5. He shall come in *all that glory* which the Father *conferred upon him* when *he set him at his own right hand*, and *gave him to be head over all things to the church*; in all the glory that is due to him as the assertor of the glory of God, and the author of the glory of all the saints. This is *his own glory*.

(2.) He shall come *in his Father's glory*. The Father will judge the world by him, having committed all judgment to him; and therefore will publicly own him in the judgment as the *brightness of his glory* and the *express image* of his person.

(3.) He shall come in *the glory of the holy angels*. They shall all *attend* him, and *minister* to him, and add every thing they can to the lustre of his appearance. What a figure will the blessed Jesus make in that day! Did we believe it, we should never be ashamed of him or his words now.

*Lastly*, To encourage them in suffering for him, he assures them that *the kingdom of God* would now *shortly be set up*, notwithstanding the great opposition that was made to it, v. 27. "Though the second coming of the Son of man is at a great distance, the kingdom of God shall come in its power in the present age, while some here present are alive." They *saw the kingdom of God* when the Spirit was poured out, when the gospel was preached to all the world and nations were brought to Christ by it; they saw the kingdom of God triumph over the Gentile nations in their *conversion*, and over the Jewish nation in its *destruction*.

## ~~LUKE~~ LUKE 9:28-36

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

We have here the narrative of Christ's transfiguration, which was designed for a specimen of that glory of his in which he will come to judge the world, of which he had lately been speaking, and, consequently, an encouragement to his disciples to suffer for him, and never to be ashamed

of him. We had this account before in Matthew and Mark, and it is well worthy to be repeated to us, and reconsidered by us, for the *confirmation of our faith* in the Lord Jesus, as *the brightness of his Father's glory* and the light of the world, for the *filling* of our minds with *high and honourable* thoughts of him, notwithstanding his being clothed with a body, and *giving us some idea* of the *glory* which he entered into at his *ascension*, and in which he now *appears* within the veil, and for the *raising and encouraging* of our *hopes and expectations* concerning the glory reserved for all believers in the future state.

**I.** Here is one circumstance of the narrative that seems to differ from the other two evangelists that related it. They said that it was *six days* after the foregoing sayings; Luke says that it was *about eight days after*, that is, it was that day sevensnight, six whole days intervening, and it was the eighth day. Some think that it was *in the night* that Christ was transfigured, because the disciples were sleepy, as in his agony, and *in the night* his appearance in splendour would be the more illustrious; if in the night, the computation of the time would be the more doubtful and uncertain; probably, in the night, between the seventh and eighth day, and so about eight days.

**II.** Here are divers circumstances added and explained, which are very material.

**1.** We are *here* told that Christ had this honour put upon him when he was *praying*: He *went up into a mountain to pray*, as he frequently did (v. 28), and *as he prayed* he was *transfigured*. When Christ *humbled* himself to pray, he was thus *exalted*. He knew before that this was designed for him at this time, and therefore seeks it by prayer. Christ himself must *sue out* the favours that were purposed for him, and promised to him: *Ask of me, and I will give thee*, <sup>PS</sup>Psalm 2:8. And thus he intended to put an *honour* upon the duty of prayer, and to *recommend* it to us. It is a transfiguring, transforming duty; if our hearts be elevated and enlarged in it, so as in it to *behold the glory of the Lord*, we shall be *changed into the same image from glory to glory*, <sup>2COR</sup>2 Corinthians 3:18. By prayer we fetch in the wisdom, grace, and joy, which *make the face to shine*.

**2.** Luke does not use the word *transfigured* — *metamorphothe* (which Matthew and Mark used), perhaps because it had been used so much in the Pagan theology, but makes use of a phrase equivalent, *to eidos tou*

*prosopou heteron* — the fashion of his countenance was another thing from what it had been: his face shone far beyond what Moses's did when he came down from the mount; and his raiment was white and glistening: it was *exastrapton* — bright like lightning (a word used only here), so that he seemed to be arrayed all with light, to cover himself with light as with a garment.

**3.** It was said in Matthew and Mark that Moses and Elias *appeared to them*; here it is said that they *appeared in glory*, to teach us that saints departed are *in glory*, are in a *glorious* state; they shine in glory. He being in glory, they *appeared with him in glory*, as all the saints shall shortly do.

**4.** We are here told what was the subject of the discourse between Christ and the two great prophets of the Old Testament: *They spoke of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Elegon ten exodon autou* — his exodus, his departure; that is, his death.

**(1.)** The death of Christ is here called his *exit*, his *going out*, his *leaving the world*. Moses and Elias spoke of it to him under that notion, to reconcile him to it, and to make the foresight of it the more easy to his human nature. The death of the saints is their *exodus*, their departure out of the Egypt of this world, their release out of a *house of bondage*. Some think that the ascension of Christ is included here in his departure; for the departure of Israel out of Egypt was a departure in *triumph*, so was his when he went from earth to heaven.

**(2.)** This departure of his he *must accomplish*; for thus it was determined, the matter was immutably fixed in the counsel of God, and could not be altered.

**(3.)** He must accomplish it at Jerusalem, though his residence was mostly in Galilee; for his most spiteful enemies were at Jerusalem, and there the sanhedrim sat, that took upon them to judge of prophets.

**(4.)** Moses and Elias spoke of this, to intimate that the *sufferings* of Christ, and his *entrance into his glory*, were what Moses and *the prophets* had *spoken of*; see [☞ Luke 24:26, 27](#); [☞ 1 Peter 1:11](#).

**(5.)** Our Lord Jesus, even in his transfiguration, was willing to enter into a discourse concerning his death and sufferings, to teach us that meditations on death, as it is our departure out of this world to another, are never unseasonable, but in a special manner seasonable when at any time we are

*advanced*, lest we should be *lifted up above measure*. In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember that here *we have no continuing city*.

**5.** We are here told, which we were not before, that the disciples were *heavy with sleep*, v. 32. When the vision first began, Peter, and James, and John were drowsy, and inclined to sleep. Either it was late, or they were weary, or had been disturbed in their rest the night before; or perhaps a charming composing air, or some sweet and melodious sounds, which disposed them to soft and gentle slumbers, were a preface to the vision; or perhaps it was owing to a sinful carelessness: when Christ was at prayer with them, they did not regard his prayer as they should have done, and, to punish them for that, they were left to *sleep on now*, when he began to be *transfigured*, and so lost an opportunity of seeing how that work of wonder was wrought. These three were now asleep, when Christ was in *his glory*, as afterwards they were, when he was in *his agony*; see the *weakness* and *frailty* of human nature, even in the best, and what need they have of the grace of God. Nothing could be more affecting to these disciples, one would think, than the *glories* and the *agonies* of their Master, and both in the highest degree; and yet neither the one nor the other would serve to *keep them awake*. What need have we to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us not only *alive*, but *lively*! Yet that they might be competent witnesses of *this sign from heaven*, to those that demanded one, after awhile they *recovered themselves*, and became perfectly awake; and then they took an exact view of all those glories, so that they were able to give a particular account, as we find one of them does, of all that passed when they were with Christ *in the holy mount*, <sup>18</sup>2 Peter 1:18.

**6.** It is here observed that it was when Moses and Elias were now about to *depart* that Peter said, *Lord, it is good to be here, let us make three tabernacles*. Thus we are often not sensible of the worth of our mercies till we are about to lose them; nor do we covet and court their continuance till they are upon the departure. Peter said this, *not knowing what he said*. Those know not what they say that talk of making tabernacles on earth for glorified saints in heaven, who have better mansions in the temple there, and long to return to them.

**7.** It is here added, concerning the *cloud* that *overshadowed them*, that they *feared as they entered into the cloud*. This cloud was a token of God's more peculiar presence. It was in a cloud that God of old took possession

of the tabernacle and temple, and, when the cloud *covered the tabernacle, Moses was not able to enter* (~~42B4~~Exodus 40:34, 35), and, when it filled the temple, the *priests could not stand to minister by reason of it,* ~~44B4~~2 Chronicles 5:14. Such a cloud was this, and then no wonder that the disciples were *afraid to enter into it*. But never let any be afraid to enter into a cloud with Jesus Christ; for he will be sure to bring them safely through it.

**8.** The *voice* which came from heaven is here, and in Mark, related not so fully as in Matthew: *This is my beloved Son, hear him:* though those words, *in whom I am well pleased,* which we have both in Matthew and Peter, are not expressed, they are implied in that, *This is my beloved Son;* for whom he *loves,* and in whom he is *well pleased,* come all to one; we are *accepted in the Beloved.*

*Lastly,* The apostles are here said to have kept this vision private. They *told no man in those days,* reserving the discovery of it for another opportunity, when the evidences of Christ's being the Son of God were completed in the pouring out of the Spirit, and that doctrine was to be published to all the world. As there is a time *to speak,* so there is a time *to keep silence.* Every thing is beautiful and useful in its season.

## ~~41B5~~ LUKE 9:37-42

### AN EVIL SPIRIT EXPELLED

This passage of story in Matthew and Mark follows immediately upon that of Christ's transfiguration, and his discourse with his disciples after it; but here it is said to be *on the next day, as they were coming down from the hill,* which confirms the conjecture that Christ was transfigured *in the night,* and, it should seem, though they did not *make tabernacles* as Peter proposed, yet they found some shelter to repose themselves in all night, for it was not till next day that they *came down from the hill,* and then he found things in some disorder among his disciples, though not so bad as Moses did when he came down from the mount. When wise and good men are in their beloved retirements, they would do well to consider whether they are not wanted in their *public stations.*

In this narrative here, observe,

**1.** How forward the people were to receive Christ at his return to them. Though he had been but a little while absent, *much people met him*, as, at other times, much people *followed* him; for so it was foretold concerning him, that *to him should the gathering of the people be*.

**2.** How importunate the father of the lunatic child was with Christ for help for him (v. 38): *I beseech thee, look upon my son*; this is his request, and it is a very modest one; one compassionate look from Christ is enough to set every thing to rights. Let us bring ourselves and our children to Christ, to be *looked upon*. His plea is, *He is my only child*. They that have many children may balance their affliction in one with their comfort in the rest; yet, if it be an only child that is a grief, the affliction in that may be balanced with the love of God in giving his only-begotten Son for us.

**3.** How *deplorable* the case of the *child* was, v. 39. He was under the power of an evil spirit, that *took him*; and diseases of that nature are more frightful than such as arise merely from natural causes: when the fit seized him without any warning given, he suddenly *cried out*, and many a time his shrieks had pierced the heart of his tender father. This malicious spirit *tore him*, and *bruised* him, and *departed not from him* but with great difficulty, and a deadly gripe at parting. O the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! And what mischief doth Satan do where he gets possession! But happy they that have access to Christ!

**4.** How defective the disciples were in their faith. Though Christ had given them *power over unclean spirits*, yet they *could not* cast out this *evil spirit*, v. 40. Either they distrusted the power they were to fetch in strength from, or the commission given to them, or they did not exert themselves in prayer as they ought; for this Christ reproved them. *O faithless and perverse generation*. Dr. Clarke understands this as spoken to his disciples: “*Will ye be yet so faithless and full of distrust that ye cannot execute the commission I have given you?*”

**5.** How effectual the cure was, which Christ wrought upon this child, v. 42. Christ can do that for us which his disciples cannot: *Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit* then when he raged most. The devil *threw the child down*, and *tore him*, distorted him, as if he would have pulled him to pieces. But one word from Christ *healed the child*, and made good the damage the devil had done him. And it is here added that he *delivered him again to his father*. Note, When our children are recovered from sickness, we must receive them as delivered to us again, receive them as life from the dead,



and as when we first received them. It is comfortable to receive them from the hand of Christ, to see him delivering them to us again: "Here, take this child, and be thankful; take it, and bring it up for me, for thou hast it again from me. Take it, and do not set thy heart too much upon it." With such cautions as these, parents should receive their children *from Christ's hands*, and then with comfort put them again *into his hands*.

## LUKE 9:43-50

### AMBITION OF THE DISCIPLES REPROVED

We may observe here,

**I.** The impression which Christ's miracles made upon all that beheld them (v. 43): *They were all amazed at the mighty power of God*, which they could not but see in all the miracles Christ wrought. Note, The works of God's almighty power are amazing, especially those that are wrought by the hand of the Lord Jesus; for he is *the power of God*, and his name is *Wonderful*. Their wonder was universal: they wondered *every one*. The causes of it were universal: they wondered at *all things which Jesus did*; all his actions had something uncommon and surprising in them.

**II.** The notice Christ gave to his disciples of his approaching sufferings: *The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men*, wicked men, men of the worst character; they shall be permitted to abuse him at their pleasure. That is here *implied* which is *expressed* by the other evangelists: *They shall kill him*. But that which is peculiar here is,

**1.** The connection of this with what goes next before, of the admiration with which the people were struck at beholding Christ's miracles (v. 43): *While they all wondered at all things which Jesus did, he said this to his disciples*. They had a fond conceit of his temporal kingdom, and that he should reign, and they with him, in secular pomp and power; and now they thought that this *mighty power* of his would easily effect the thing, and his interest gained by his miracles in the people would contribute to it; and therefore Christ, who knew what was in their hearts, takes this occasion to tell them again, what he had told them before, that he was so far from having men *delivered into his hands* that he must be *delivered into the hands of men*, so far from living in honour that he must die in disgrace;

and all his miracles, and the interest he has by them gained in the hearts of the people, will not be able to prevent it.

**2.** The solemn preface with which it is introduced: “*Let these sayings sink down into your ears; take special notice of what I say, and mix faith with it; let not the notions you have of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah stop your ears against it, nor make you unwilling to believe it. Admit what I say, and submit to it.*” *Let it sink down into your hearts;* so the Syriac and Arabic read it. The word of Christ does us no good, unless we let it sink down into our heads and hearts.

**3.** The unaccountable stupidity of the disciples, with reference to this prediction of Christ's sufferings. It was said in Mark, *They understood not that saying.* It was plain enough, but they *would not* understand it in the literal sense, because it agreed not with their notions; and they *could not* understand it in any other, *and were afraid to ask him* lest they should be undeceived and awaked out of their pleasing dream. But it is here added that *it was hidden from them, that they perceived it not,* through the weakness of faith and the power of prejudice. We cannot think that it was *in mercy* hidden from them, lest they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow at the prospect of it; but that it was a paradox, because they *made it so* to themselves.

**III.** The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for their disputing among themselves which should be greatest, v. 46-48. This passage we had before, and, the more is the pity, we shall meet with the like again. Observe here,

**1.** Ambition of honour, and strife for superiority and precedency, are sins that most easily beset the disciples of our Lord Jesus, for which they deserve to be severely rebuked; they flow from corruptions which they are highly concerned to subdue and mortify, v. 46. They that expect to be *great* in this world commonly aim high, and nothing will serve them short of being *greatest*; this exposes them to a great deal of temptation and trouble, which they are safe from that are content to be *little*, to be *least*, to be *less than the least*.

**2.** Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts: He *perceived their thoughts*, v. 47. Thoughts are *words* to him, and *whispers* are loud cries. It is a good reason why we should keep up a strict

government of our thoughts because Christ takes a strict cognizance of them.

**3.** Christ will have his disciples to aim at that honour which is to be obtained by a quiet and condescending humility, and not at that which is to be obtained by a restless and aspiring ambition. Christ *took a child, and set him by him*, v. 47 (for he always expressed a tenderness and kindness for little children), and he proposed *this child* to them for an example.

**(1.)** Let them be of the *temper* of this child, *humble* and *quiet*, and *easy* to itself; let them not affect worldly pomp, or grandeur, or high titles, but be as dead to them as this child; let them bear no more malice to their rivals and competitors than this child did. Let them be willing to be *the least*, if that would contribute any thing to their usefulness, to stoop to the meanest office whereby they might *do good*.

**(2.)** Let them assure themselves that this was the way to preferment; for this would recommend them to the esteem of their brethren: they that loved Christ would *therefore receive* them *in his name*, because they did most resemble him, and they would likewise recommend themselves to his favour, for Christ would take the kindnesses done to them as done to himself: *Whosoever shall receive one such child*, a preacher of the gospel that is of such a disposition as this, he placeth his respect aright, and *receiveth me*; and *whosoever receiveth me*, in such a minister, *receiveth him that sent me*; and what greater honour can any man attain to in this world than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ, and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him? This honour have all the humble disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus they shall be truly great that are least among them.

**IV.** The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for discouraging one that honoured him and served him, but was not of their communion, not only not one of the twelve, nor one of the seventy, but not one of those that ever associated with them, or attended on them, but, upon occasional hearing of Christ, believed in him, and made use of his name with faith and prayer in a serious manner, for the casting out of devils. Now,

**1.** This man they *rebuked and restrained*; they would not let him pray and preach, though it was to the honour of Christ, though it did good to men and weakened Satan's kingdom, because he did not *follow Christ with them*; he separated from their church, was not ordained as they were, paid

them no respect, nor gave them the right hand of fellowship. Now, if ever any society of Christians in this world had reason to silence those that were not of their communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; and yet, 2. Jesus Christ chid them for what they did, and warned them not to do the like again, nor any that profess to be successors of the apostles: “*Forbid him not* (v. 50), but rather encourage him, for he is carrying on the same design that you are, though, for reasons best known to himself, he does not follow *with you*; and he will meet you in *the same end*, though he does not accompany you in *the same way*. You *do well* to do as you do, but it does not therefore follow that he *does ill* to do as he does, and that you do well to put him under an interdict, for *he that is not against us is for us*, and therefore ought to be countenanced by us.” We need not lose any of our friends, while we have so few, and so many enemies. Those may be found faithful followers of Christ, and, as such, may be accepted of him, though they do not follow *with us*. See ~~418~~ Mark 9:38, 39. O what a great deal of mischief to the church, even from those that boast of relation to Christ, and pretend to *envy for his sake*, would be prevented, if this passage of story were but duly considered!

## ~~418~~ LUKE 9:51-56

### MISTAKEN ZEAL OF JAMES AND JOHN

This passage of story we have not in any other of the evangelists, and it seems to come in here for the sake of its affinity with that next before, for in this also Christ rebuked his disciples, because they envied for his sake. There, under colour of zeal for Christ, they were for silencing and restraining separatists: here, under the same colour, they were for putting infidels to death; and, as for *that*, so for *this* also, Christ reprimanded them, for a spirit of bigotry and persecution is directly contrary to the spirit of Christ and Christianity. Observe here,

**I.** The *readiness* and *resolution* of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, v. 51: *When the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*. Observe

**1.** There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain

foresight of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short.

**2.** When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be *received up into glory* (<sup>5486</sup>1 Timothy 3:16), received up into the highest heavens, to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spoke of his death as his departure out of this world, which made it not *formidable*; but he went further, and looked upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very *desirable*. All good Christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being *received up*, to be with Christ where he is; and, when the *time* of their being *received up* is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that *their redemption draws nigh*.

**3.** On this prospect of the joy set before him, he *stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem* the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully *determined to go*, and would not be dissuaded; he went *directly to Jerusalem*, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and courageously thither, though he knew the things that should befall him there. He *did not fail nor was discouraged*, but *set his face as a flint, knowing that he should be not only justified, but glorified* (<sup>2307</sup>Isaiah 50:7), not only not *run down*, but *received up*. How should this shame us *for*, and shame us *out of*, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ! We draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service who stedfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.

**II.** The *rudeness* of the Samaritans in a *certain village* (not named, nor deserving to be so) who would not *receive him*, nor suffer him to bait in their town, though his way lay through it. Observe here,

**1.** How *civil* he was to them: *He sent messengers before his face*, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his company among them; for he would not come to give *offence*, or if they took any umbrage at the number

of his followers. He sent some to *make ready* for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprise.

**2.** How *uncivil* they were to him, v. 53. They did not *receive him*, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out. He would have *paid* for all he *bespoke*, and been a generous guest among them, would have done them good, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, ~~Ⓜ~~ John 4:41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the reason was *because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*; they observed, by his motions, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship — whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sychar; see ~~Ⓜ~~ John 4:20. And so hot was the controversy between them that the *Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans*, nor they with them, ~~Ⓜ~~ John 4:9. Yet we may suppose that they did not deny other Jews lodgings among them, no, not when they went up to the feast; for if that had been their constant practice Christ would not have attempted it, and it would have been a great way about for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem any other way than through Samaria. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated teacher, for owning and adhering to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which, they hoped, would have driven him to come and worship at *their* temple, and bring that into reputation; but when they saw that he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not show him the common civility which probably they used formerly to show him in his journey thither.

**III.** The *resentment* which James and John expressed of this affront, v. 54. When these two heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village: “Lord,” say they, “give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to *frighten* them only, but to *consume* them.”

**1.** Here indeed was something commendable, for they showed,

**(1.)** A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned in their commission, yet

they could with a word's speaking fetch *fire from heaven*. *Theleis eipomen* — *Wilt thou that we speak the word*, and the thing will be done.

(2.) A great zeal for the honour of their Master. They took it very ill that he who did good wherever he came and found a hearty welcome should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of paltry Samaritans; they could not think of it without indignation that their Master should be thus slighted.

(3.) A submission, notwithstanding, to their Master's good will and pleasure. They will not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave: *Wilt thou that we do it?*

(4.) A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them. It is doing *as Elias did?* they would not have thought of such a thing if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, ~~400~~2 Kings 1:10, 12. They thought that this *precedent* would be their *warrant*; so apt are we to misapply the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel.

2. But though there was something right in what they said, yet there was much more amiss, for

(1.) This was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been thus affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast; and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up with the injury.

(2.) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected, and perhaps they had heard that Christ had forbidden his disciples to *enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans* (~~400~~Matthew 10:5), and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others who knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him.

(3.) Perhaps it was only some few of the town that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while, for aught they knew, there were many in the town who, if they had heard of Christ's being so near them, would have gone to meet him and welcomed him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked?

(4.) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for *fire from heaven*, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any *sign from heaven* when they demanded it (~~416~~ Matthew 16:1, 2); and why should they think to introduce it? James and John were the two disciples whom Christ had called *Boanerges* — *sons of thunder* (~~417~~ Mark 3:17); and will not that serve them, but they must be *sons of lightning* too?

(5.) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to display the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a bold reprover against the idolatries and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved; but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests that their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but, though the *place* was the same, the *times* were altered.

**IV.** The *reproof* he gave to James and John for their fiery, furious zeal (v. 55): He *turned* with a just displeasure, and *rebuked them*; for *as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens*, particularly for what they do, that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

**1.** He shows them in particular their mistake: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*; that is,

(1.) “*You are not aware* what an *evil spirit* and disposition you are of; how much there is of pride, and passion, and personal revenge, covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master.” Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too, in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it.

(2.) “*You do not consider* what a *good spirit*, directly contrary to this, you *should be of*. Surely you have yet to learn, though you have been so long learning, what the spirit of Christ and Christianity is. Have you not been taught to *love your enemies*, and to *bless them that curse you*, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them? You know not how contrary your disposition herein is to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be *delivered* into. You are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in with a proclamation of *peace on earth* and *good will toward men*, to which you ought to



accommodate yourselves, and not by such imprecations as these oppose yourselves.”

**2.** He shows them the general design and tendency of his religion (v. 56): *The Son of man* is not himself come, and therefore does not send you abroad *to destroy men's lives, but to save them*. He designed to propagate his holy religion by love and sweetness, and every thing that is inviting and endearing, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to *slay all enmities*, not to foster them. Those are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel that are for anathematizing and rooting out by violence and persecution all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came, not only to save men's *souls*, but to save their *lives* too — witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been *mortal*, by which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples do good to all, to the utmost of their power, but hurt to none, to draw men into his church with the *cords of a man and the bands of love*, but not think to drive men into it with a *rod of violence* or the *scourge of the tongue*.

**V.** His *retreat* from this village. Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road (which was as free to him as to his neighbours), would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably *went to another village*, where they were not so stingy and bigoted, and there refreshed himself, and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is wisdom to get out of the way of it, rather than to contend with it. If some be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

## LUKE 9:57-62

### EVERY THING TO BE LEFT FOR CHRIST

We have here an account of three several persons that offered themselves to follow Christ, and the answers that Christ gave to each of them. The two former we had an account of in ~~4121~~ Matthew 19:21.

**I.** Here is one that is extremely forward to follow Christ immediately, but seems to have been too rash, hasty, and inconsiderate, and not to have set down and counted the cost.

**1.** He makes Christ a very large promise (v. 57): *As they went in the way, going up to Jerusalem, where it was expected Christ would first appear in his glory, one said to him, Lord, I will follow thee withersoever thou goest.* This must be the resolution of all that will be found Christ's disciples indeed; they *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes* (<sup><404></sup>Revelation 14:4), though it be through fire and water, to prisons and deaths.

**2.** Christ gives him a necessary caution, not to promise himself great things in the world, in following him, but, on the contrary, to count upon poverty and meanness; for *the Son of man has not where to lay his head.*

We may look upon this,

**(1.)** As *setting forth the very low condition* that our Lord Jesus was in, in this world. He not only wanted the delights and ornaments that great princes usually have, but even such accommodations for mere necessity as the *foxes* have, and the *birds of the air*. See what a *depth of poverty* our Lord Jesus submitted to for us, to increase the worth and merit of his satisfaction, and to purchase for us a larger *allowance of grace, that we through his poverty might be rich,* <sup><409></sup>2 Corinthians 8:9. He that made all did not make a dwelling-place for himself, not a house of his own to put his head in, but what he was beholden to others for. He here calls himself the *Son of man*, a Son of Adam, partaker of flesh and blood. He glories in his condescension towards us, not only to the meanness of our nature, but to the meanest condition in that nature, to testify his love to us, and to teach us a holy contempt of the world and of great things in it, and a continual regard to another world. Christ was thus poor, to sanctify and sweeten poverty to his people; the apostles had not certain dwelling-place (<sup><411></sup>1 Corinthians 4:11), which they might the better bear when they knew their Master had not; see <sup><411></sup>2 Samuel 11:11. We may well be content to fare as Christ did.

**(2.)** As proposing this to the consideration of those who intend to be his disciples. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world, and not reckon upon making any thing *more than heaven* of our religion, as we must resolve not to take up with any thing *less*. Let us not go about to compound the profession of Christianity

with secular advantages; Christ has *put them asunder*, let us not think of *joining them together*; on the contrary, we must expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations, must *deny ourselves*, and *take up our cross*. Christ tells this man what he must count upon if he followed him, to lie cold and uneasy, to fare hard, and live in contempt; if he could not submit to this, let him not pretend to follow Christ. This word sent him back, for aught that appears; but it will be no discouragement to any that know what there is in Christ and heaven to set in the scale against this.

**II.** Here is another, that seems *resolved* to follow Christ, but he *begs a day*, v. 59. To this man Christ first gave the call; he said to him, *Follow me*. He that proposed the thing of himself fled off when he heard of the difficulties that attended it; but this man to whom Christ gave a call, though he hesitated at first, yet, as it should seem, afterwards yielded; so true was that of Christ, *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*, <sup><RIS6</sup>John 15:16. It is not of *him that willeth*, nor of *him that runneth* (as that forward spark in the foregoing verses), but of God that showeth mercy, that *gives* the call, and *makes it effectual*, as to this man here. Observe,

**1.** The excuse he made: “*Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father*. I have an aged father at home, who cannot live long, and will need me while he does live; let me go and attend on him until he is dead, and I have performed my last office of love to him, and then I will do any thing.” We may here see three temptations, by which we are in danger of being drawn and kept from following Christ, which therefore we should guard against:

**(1.)** We are tempted to *rest* in a *discipleship at large*, in which we may be *at a loose end*, and not to come *close*, and give up ourselves to be *strict* and *constant*.

**(2.)** We are tempted to *defer* the doing of that which we know to be our duty, and to put it off to some other time. When we have got clear of such a care and difficulty, when we have despatched such a business, raised an estate to such a pitch, then we will begin to think of being religious; and so we are cozened out of all our time, by being cozened out of the present time.

**(3.)** We are tempted to think that our duty to our relations will excuse us from our duty to Christ. It is a plausible excuse indeed: “*Let me go and*

*bury my father*, — let me take care of my family, and provide for my children, and then I will think of serving Christ;” whereas the *kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof* must be sought ad minded in the first place.

**2.** Christ's answer to it (v. 60): “*Let the dead bury their dead*. Suppose (which is not likely) that there are none but the dead to bury their dead, or none but those who are themselves aged and dying, who are *as good as dead*, and fit for no other service, yet thou hast other work to do; *go thou, and preach the kingdom of God*.” Not that Christ would have his followers or his ministers to be *unnatural*; our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every relation, to *show piety at home*, and to *requite our parents*. But we must not make these offices an excuse from our duty to God. If the nearest and dearest relation we have in the world stand in our way to keep us from Christ, it is necessary that we have a zeal that will make us forget *father and mother*, as Levi did, <sup><650></sup>Deuteronomy 33:9. This disciple was called to be a minister, and therefore must not *entangle himself with the affairs of this world*, <sup><510></sup>2 Timothy 2:4. And it is a rule that, whenever Christ calls to any duty, we must not *consult with flesh and blood*, <sup><415></sup>Galatians 1:15, 16. No excuses must be admitted against a present obedience to the call of Christ.

**III.** Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a *little time to talk with his friends* about it.

Observe,

**1.** His request for a dispensation, v. 61. He said, “*Lord, I will follow thee*; I design no other, I am determined to do it: but *let me first go bid them farewell that are at home*.” This seemed reasonable; it was what Elisha desired when Elijah called him, *Let me kiss my father and my mother*; and it was allowed him: but the ministry of the gospel is *preferable*, and the service of it more urgent than that of the prophets; and therefore here it would not be allowed. Suffer me *apotaxasthai tois eis ton oikon mou* — *Let me go and set in order my household affairs*, and give direction concerning them; so some understand it. Now that which was amiss in this is,

**(1.)** That he looked upon his following Christ as a melancholy, troublesome, dangerous thing; it was to him as if he were *going to die* and therefore he must take *leave* of all his friends, never to *see them again*, or

never *with any comfort*; whereas, in following Christ, he might be more a comfort and blessing to them than if he had continued with them.

(2.) That he seemed to have his worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and than would consist with a close attendance to his duty as a follower of Christ. He seemed to hanker after his relations and family concerns, and he could not part easily and suitably from them, but they stuck to him. It may be he had bidden them *farewell* once, but *Loth to depart bids oft farewell*, and therefore he must bid them *farewell* once more, for they are *at home at his house*.

(3.) That he was willing to enter into a temptation from his purpose of following Christ. To go and bid them *farewell* that were *at home at his house* would be to expose himself to the strongest solicitations imaginable to alter his resolution; for they would all be against it, and would *beg* and *pray* that he would not *leave them*. Now it was presumption in him to thrust himself into such a temptation. Those that resolve to walk with their Maker, and follow their Redeemer, must resolve that they will not so much as parley with their tempter.

2. The rebuke which Christ gave him for this request (v. 62): “*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and designing to make good work of his ploughing, will look back, or look behind him, for then he makes balks with his plough, and the ground he ploughs is not fit to be sown; so thou, if thou hast a design to follow me and to reap the advantages of those that do so, yet if thou lookest back to a worldly life again and hankerest after that, if thou lookest back as Lot's wife did to Sodom, which seems to be alluded to here, thou art not fit for the kingdom of God.*”

(1.) “*Thou art not soil fit to receive the good seed of the kingdom of God if thou art thus ploughed by the halves, and not gone through with.*”

(2.) “*Thou art not a sower fit to scatter the good seed of the kingdom if thou canst hold the plough no better.*” Ploughing is in order to sowing. As those are not fit to be *sown* with divine comforts whose *fallow ground* is not first *broken up*, so those are not fit to be employed in sowing who know not how to break up the fallow ground, but, when they have *laid their hand to the plough*, upon every occasion look back and think of quitting it. Note, Those who begin with the work of God must resolve to *go on* with it, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back inclines to *drawing back*, and *drawing back* is to *perdition*. Those are not fit for

heaven who, having set their faces heavenward, face about. But he, and he only, that *endures to the end, shall be saved.*