

Humility & homelessness

a. Faithless & perverse generation (9:37-45)

9:37-42 What expectation has Christ toward His generation?

[1] [9:37] He soon returned to His accustomed work of doing good to a sin-stricken world. In His life on earth, to receive honour and have visions of glory was the exception. To minister to others, to heal all who were oppressed by the devil, to do acts of mercy to sinners, was the rule. Happy are those Christians who have learned of Jesus to live for others more than for themselves, and who understand that it is "more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35). **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.321

[2] [9:38,40] Great is the power of prayer and intercession! The child of many prayers shall seldom be cast away. God's time of conversion may not be ours. He may think fit to prove our faith by keeping us long waiting. But so long as a child lives, and a parent prays, we have no right to despair about that child's soul. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.321

[3] The mountain-top experience is followed in all three Synoptists by the distressing inability of the disciples to deal with a case of demon possession. The contrast is striking. On the one hand we have those who rejoiced in the light of God on the mountain top, on the other those defeated by the powers of darkness on the plain. But the supremacy of Jesus is evident in both places. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.173

[4] [9:41] The moral contrast between the peace and glory on the mount and the struggle and failure down below is intense, and is magnificently brought out by Raffaele in the great picture of the Transfiguration,

which was his last work. The combination of the two scenes is fatal to the unity of the subject, which is really two pictures in one frame; but it heightens the moral and dramatic effect. It is perhaps even more instructive to regard it as three pictures. Christ and the saints in glory; the chosen three blinded by the light; the remaining nine baffled by the powers of darkness. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.254

[5] [9:41] The question has been often raised, "To whom were these words addressed? and with what purpose were they spoken?" Were they meant to apply to the disciples only, and to be a rebuke to their unbelief? This is the opinion of Origen. Were they, on the other hand, addressed to the whole multitude of the Jews, as well as to the disciples? This is the opinion of Hilary, Chrysostom, and Jerome. Did our Lord refer to the contrast between the vision of glory he had just left in the Mount of Transfiguration, in the company of Moses and Elias, and the unbelief and wickedness of the generation among who He was sojourning? **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.325

9:43-45 Why is the paradox of v.44 timely?

[6] ... let us learn that men may understand spiritual things very feebly, and yet be true children of God. The head may be very dull, when the heart is right. Grace is far better than gifts, and faith than knowledge. If a man has faith and grace enough to give up all for Christ's sake, and to take up the cross and follow him, he shall be saved in spite of much ignorance. **J.C. Ryle** p.324

Do we realize that
mountain-top experiences
are preparing us for life in
the valleys & plains?



Photo © Alfred Eisenstaedt / LIFE

"Most of the trouble in the
world is caused by people
wanting to be important."
– T.S. Eliot

'Wisdom shall die with us!' - learning a lesson with the apostles

[9] The conduct of John and the disciples on this occasion is a curious illustration of the oneness of human nature, in every age. Thousands, in every period of Church history, have spent their lives in copying John's mistake. They have laboured to stop every man who will not work for Christ in their way, from working for Christ at all. They have imagined, in the petty self-conceit, that no man can be a soldier of Christ, unless he wears their uniform, and fights in their regiment. ... The divisions and varieties of opinion which exist among Christians are undeniably very great. The schisms and separations which are continually arising about Church-government, and modes of worship, are very perplexing to tender consciences. Shall we approve those divisions? We cannot do so. Union is strength. The disunion of Christians is one cause of the slow progress of vital Christianity. ... The plain truth is, that we are all too ready to say, "We are the men, and

wisdom shall die with us." (Job 12:2). We forget that no Church on earth has an absolute monopoly of all wisdom, and that people may be right in the main, without agreeing with us. We must learn to be thankful if sin is opposed, and the Gospel preached, and the devil's kingdom pulled down, though the work may not be done exactly in the way we like. We must try to believe that men may be true-hearted followers of Jesus Christ, and yet for some wise reason may be kept back from seeing all things in religion just as we do. Above all, we must praise God if souls are converted, and Christ is magnified, no matter who the preacher may be, and to what Church he may belong. Happy are those who can say with Paul, "If Christ be preached, I rejoice, yea and will rejoice," (Phil. 1:18.) and with Moses, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that all did prophecy." (Num. 11:29.) **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 pp. 328-330

b. Humility & the sectarian spirit (9:46-56)

9:46-48 What might have generated this ego-stroking exhibition? (vv.20,28??)

[7] [9:46] Whether anyone outside their company was greater than they were, was not a question which interested them. The point in dispute was, who among themselves was greater than the rest of them; who stood nearest to the Christ, and had the highest place in the Kingdom (Mt). The question illustrates the want of perception just mentioned (ver. 45). **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.257

[8] [9:46] And all this happened in the company of Christ Himself, and under the noon-tide blaze of His teaching. Such is the heart of man! There is something very instructive in this fact. ... Of all sins there is none against which we have such need to watch and pray, as pride. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and a sickness that destroyeth at noon day. No sin is so deeply rooted in our nature. It cleaves to us like our skin. Its roots never entirely die. They are ready, at any moment, to spring up, and exhibit a most pernicious vitality. No sin is so specious and deceitful. It can wear the garb of humility itself. It can lurk in the hearts of the ignorant, the ungifted, and the poor, as well as in the minds of the great, the learned, and the rich. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.327

“From no quarter perhaps has the Church received so much injury as from ignorant but well-meaning men. We must seek to have knowledge as well as zeal.”

– J.C. Ryle

extent of murdering them on occasion (*Bellum* ii. 232; *Antiquities*, xx. 118; this latter passage tells us that it was the custom of the Galileans to pass through Samaria at festival time). **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.179

[12] [9:54] There is great faith in Jesus in this question. In the face of the insult to their Master they felt they had to call for the fire in Jesus' name and it would be given. But this is more credit to their zeal and their devotion to Jesus than to their understanding of the nature of Christian service. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.179

[13] [9:54] This section begins, as the previous one ends, with a lesson of toleration. In the one case the Apostles were taught that they were not to take upon themselves to hinder the work of an apparent outsider who seemed to be friendly. Here they are taught not to take upon themselves to punish professed outsiders who are manifestly unfriendly. Moreover, as the ministry in Galilee is made to begin with a typical rejection of Christ at Nazareth (4:16-30), so this ministry outside Galilee begins with a rejection of Him by Samaritans. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.261

[14] [9:54] Here was zeal indeed, and zeal of a most plausible kind, zeal for the honour of Christ! Here was zeal, justified and supported by a Scriptural example, and that the example of no less a prophet than Elijah! But it was not a zeal according to knowledge. ... It is clear as daylight, from this and other cases related in the Bible, that it is not enough to be zealous and *well-meaning*. Very grave faults are frequently committed with good intentions. From no quarter perhaps has the Church received so much injury as from ignorant but well-meaning men. We must seek to have knowledge as well as zeal. Zeal without knowledge is an army without a general, and a ship without a rudder. We must pray that we may understand how to make a right application of Scripture. The word is no doubt “a light to our feet, and a lantern to our path.” But it must be the word rightly handled, and properly applied. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 pp.333, 334

9:49-56 Which spirit is still inhabiting John and James? (Mark 3:17)

[10] [9:49,50] A Second Lesson in Humility, the Humility of Toleration. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.258

[11] [9:53] But the Samaritan villagers, seeing that *his face was set toward Jerusalem*, would have nothing to do with Jesus. Their feud with the Jews was so bitter that they would not help anyone travel to Jerusalem, though apparently they did not mind receiving Galileans as such. Josephus tells us that Samaritans were not averse to ill-treating pilgrims going up to Jerusalem, even to the

c. King without a castle, even a home! (9:57-62)

9:57,58 In carefully counting the cost of Christ's commitment to the kingdom of God, leading up to the climactic statement of v.51, what irony does Luke underline? (4:16-30, 8:37; 9:22)

[15] [9:51- 19:28] We may regard this as a narrative of the second main period of Christ's ministry. Galilee, with Capernaum as a centre, ceases to be the almost exclusive sphere of His teaching,

and we may say that henceforward He has no centre. Although this period is only one-third as long as the preceding one, it is described with much greater minuteness, and the narrative of it is nearly one-third longer. It is manifest that Luke is here employing material which was not used by Mark or Matthew, and we know neither its source nor its character. A great deal of it must have been either in writing or stereotyped in an oral form; and a great deal of it would seem to have had a Aramaic original, the translation of which abounds in marks of Luke's own style. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.260

John's wish fulfilled: Fire from heaven indeed for Samaria!

[21] Three times we have sins against charity recorded in the Gospels as committed by John. Once we find him and his brother asking to sit at Christ's right and left hand in His kingdom, and to be preferred before all the other apostles. Once we find him forbidding a man to cast out devils, because he did not follow the apostles. Here again we find him showing a fierce and cruel spirit against the Samaritan villagers for not receiving our Lord. Yet this was the apostle who proved at last most remarkable for preaching

love and charity. No change is too great for the Lord to work. ... It is an interesting fact, that the apostle John, at a later period in his life, came down to Samaria in a very different spirit. He came with Peter on a special mission from Jerusalem, to confer spiritual blessings on Samaritan believers. And we are told that he “preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” (Acts 8:25) **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 pp. 336, 337

[16] [9:58] The conduct of those ministers and Christians who keep back the trials of Christianity from inquirers, and suppress the cross in order to swell the ranks of their own sect, or party, or congregation, is very unlike the conduct of Christ. To obtain adherents to our ranks by incorrect and partial statements, is a procedure to which no Christian should ever condescend. Better a small congregation honestly obtained, than a large one gathered by false representations. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.343

[17] [9:58] Not because of His poverty, but because of the wandering life which His work involved, a life which was now more unsettled than ever. Nazareth had cast Him out; of His own choice He had left Capernaum; Samaritans had refused to receive Him; in the intervals of necessary rest He had no home. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.266

9:59-62 Name the chief qualification for Christ's kingdom (Matt.6:33)

[18] Some hold that, had the father been a corpse at home, the man would probably not have been with Jesus at all; he would have been occupied with duties connected with the funeral. On this view his request was to stay at home until his father died. This might have meant an indefinite delay and the affairs of the kingdom cannot be put off. But the words have an even greater urgency if

the father was dead. The Jews counted proper burial as most important. The duty of burial took precedence over the study of the Law, the Temple service, the killing of the Passover sacrifice, the observance of circumcision and the reading of the Megillah (*Megillah* 3b). But the demands of the kingdom were more urgent still. Jesus could not wait while the man got through all that burial meant. **Leon Morris** p.180

What would J.C.Ryle – & the
Apostles – have made of
prosperity preachers?
And what would the Lord,
who had no home, think of
“name it, claim it”?

[19] The case of Elisha (1 Kings 19:20) may have been in the man's mind. His heart is still with the past. He must enjoy it just once more before he gives it up. Levi had done what this man wished to do, but in a different spirit. He gave a farewell entertainment for his old associates, but in order to introduce them to Christ. The banquet was given to Him (5:29). This man wants to leave Christ in order to take leave of his friends. **A. Plummer** p.268

[20] [9:57-62] The good soldier will not allow his heart to be entangled too much with his home. If he daily gives way to unmanly repining about those he has left behind him, he will never be fit for a campaign. His present duties – the watching, the marching, the fighting – must have the principle place in his thoughts. So must it be with all who would serve Christ. They must beware of softness spoiling their characters as Christians. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.342