

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 9- Luke 9:51-56

189- Jesus Was Determined To Go To Jerusalem- Part 2

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Luke 9:51-56

51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

54 When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "**You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;**

56 **for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.**"]
And they went on to another village.

To the Glory of God

Now let's look again at **Luke 9: 52:**

and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

So they're headed down towards Jerusalem in a meandering fashion- a journey that is going to literally take them months and months to accomplish. And the first place it says the advance team went was a village of the Samaritans. And this is huge because it illustrates what Dr. Luke is saying to this Greek dignitary to whom he wrote these two Books- Theophilus.

This tells us that the Ministry of Jesus was extensive and expansive- because it went way beyond the conventional limitations of the Jew of that day. You see, Matthew focuses his gospel entirely on the Jews- to tell them that Jesus is the true King of the Jews. But Luke embraces the entire Gentile world. Luke knocks down all the conventional walls of Jewish self- righteousness and exclusiveness.

Back in Chapter 1- in the Magnificat of Mary- Mary celebrates the blessing of God upon the Jews. But in the blessing of Simeon at the temple of the child Jesus in Chapter 2- Simeon celebrates the Salvation of the Gentiles. So very early on in this Gospel- we know from Luke's account that this is a Messiah- Who has come to both Jew and Gentile and when He goes to the synagogue in Nazareth and preaches that great sermon out of **Luke 6**- He says in effect,

"Salvation is not just for Jews. Salvation is for anyone who is: the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed- whether they are Jew or Gentile."

And Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3** that God didn't just love the Jew- but that the Father loved the entire world and that whoever has been blessed by God with saving faith to believe in Him- no matter what his culture or his nation or his language or the amount of sin he is in- if he believes- not if he is born in the right family- but if he believes- he would have eternal life- regardless of who they were. This was radical Theology.

Anyone who has been given the Sovereign ability to know that they are spiritually destitute can be saved- just like in the Old Testament when God went to a pagan Gentile widow in Zarephath and God also delivered a Syrian Gentile terrorist named Naaman.

So Luke features the expansiveness of God's redemptive Mercy here by telling us that the first place that Jesus sent His ambassadors to was a Samaritan village.

Remember- it was Dr. Luke who reminds us of how Jesus hung around tax collectors and prostitutes and criminals and riff-raff and needy people. Luke writes about the lepers and the demonized and the diseased and the dead and women and thieves and the fringes of society and even further, as we'll see in the chapters ahead of us, the poor, the handicapped, the blind and even children.

So Jesus just shattered all the stereotypes. The rabbis didn't want to pay attention to any of those groups. But Jesus cared for those of low status, all ages, all genders, all races offering divine mercy to everybody. At the same time that the Pharisees and the scribes, according to **Matthew 23:23**, paid no attention to justice or mercy, Jesus broke all the conventional stereotypes of religion.

And so, Jesus has to train His Twelve to this expansive proclamation of the true Gospel- that it doesn't matter where you have been; it doesn't matter what you have done; it doesn't matter how bad you have been or how long you have been bad. The Gospel is for every single person who believes and we have no idea who that is- so everyone who has been mercifully granted repentance will be saved- regardless of their background. That is Grace. That is the Christian Gospel.

And people who want to exclude the Gospel and the Church and make it only for those that they want to accept are no better than these self-righteous Jews. Listen to me- you do not weaken the Gospel by opening it up to the whole world- you strengthen it. You weaken the Gospel by placing restrictions on who can be saved and who can hear and who can be your brother and sister.

Only the elect will be saved. That is what the Bibel teaches. But we do not have a clue who the elect is. So we are commanded to sow seed to as many people as we can every day and we are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature and we are command to work with and to love and to accept all who name the name of Jesus- regardless of where they are coming from.

If they are chosen- they will serve God and if they do not serve God- it is because God is not dealing with them- at least not right now. That isn't any of our business. We do not get to pick our natural brothers and sisters and we do not get to pick our spiritual brothers and sisters either. But we are commanded to love every single person that God loves- regardless of background and regardless of how dirty they have been.

Now it is very important to know that most of the false religions of the world have absolutely no mercy. The false deities of these doctrines of demons are vicious demanding "gods" who care little or nothing or the people who devote themselves to them. Islam is absolutely without mercy as the wicked god- Allah requires his followers to strap bombs to their children. That is merciless. Hinduism and Buddhism are without

any mercy at all. The false gods of these pagan religions care nothing about their followers.

And back in the 1st Century- the Jews had very little mercy for children or women. They had no mercy at all for Gentiles. And of all the people on the earth- the Jews hated the Samaritans. And the Samaritans hated the Jews right back. So there was great animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Samaria was right in the middle between Galilee and Jerusalem and when Jews would travel down from Galilee towards Jerusalem- they would walk around Samaria so their feet wouldn't pick up any dirt from Samaria.

It is like what we have had here in Gulfport- where you have Gulfport proper and the area here where our Church is located- the Orange Grove area. A few years ago- the City of Gulfport wanted to annex Orange Grove. And as they made their plans- they wanted to just skip over the area right in the middle called, "North Gulfport" where all the poor people live. It took a Federal Judge to force Gulfport to annex North Gulfport before they could annex Orange Grove.

And back in the 1st Century- Jews wouldn't even walk through Samaria. They'd go all the way around and cross over the River Jordan twice- just to avoid going through Samaria- because they considered it to be a defiled, unclean place where half breeds lived.

And the Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Jews who did travel through Samaria did so at great risk- carrying their own food so they wouldn't have to eat at the hands of the Samaritans. And some of the Jews were murdered on the way through.

So this was typical middle-eastern tribal hostility that we see even today. Samaritans were a mixed race, semi-pagan offspring of Israelites from the northern kingdom who were left behind when the northern kingdom was taken into Assyrian captivity, they were left there, they intermarried with pagans who were loyal to the Assyrian king so they were considered to be "half breeds" and they had abandoned their Jewish roots and heritage and had absorbed paganism.

But **2Kings 17:33** says that they feared the Lord to some extent- even though they continued to serve their own gods. So they were a strange mixture of race and religion. And they conducted their worship at a place called Mount Gerizim because their temple had been destroyed in 128 BC by a man named Hecanus.

So even though they had no temple- they still had their own religion- which was full of spirit but void of any truth. So they were a mongrel race and a mongrel religion- deemed unclean and hated by the Jews.

But we need to remember that much to the Jews amazement- it was to a Samaritan woman that Jesus first revealed His Messiahship in **John 4**. And Jesus made a Samaritan the hero of one of His most wonderful stories called, "The Good Samaritan," which was a scathing rebuke to the Jewish leaders- because the rabbis and the Jewish leaders passed by and didn't help the man. And later Jesus commissioned the Apostles to take the Gospel into Samaria.

So the Lord Jesus never had a problem with extending the borders of His Mercy. And so He sent messengers on ahead of Him into the despised area of the Samaritans. Now look at **Luke 9:53**:

But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

Now why didn't they receive Him? Because they didn't like Jesus' Theology? Because they had some religious problem? No, the Samaritans didn't receive Jesus because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. They hated the fact that He was going down to worship at that Temple in Jerusalem- which they despised. And they were so jealous. As I said- their temple had been destroyed in 128 BC by Herkanus and was never rebuilt and they had this meager sort of unsophisticated outdoor kind of worship while this magnificent Herodian temple was in the city of Jerusalem and it was just a bone of contention and a point of jealousy with them and so they weren't about to accommodate anybody in their enemy camp going down there.

Hate had already existed between them and it was exacerbated by the destruction of their own facility. Old feelings ran deep and were lasting.

And so it wasn't really a theological objection- it was more about this whole racial thing and this jealousy thing. And in verse 54 when Jesus' disciples, James and John, saw this- their own deep seated feelings rose to the surface and they said,

"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

And who could blame them, right? I mean God surely wasn't interested in these pagan half breeds anyway. God would never choose a Samaritan, right? And now they have insulted Jesus and so this reaction is somewhat understandable. The Apostles love the Lord and they've seen His Glory on the mountain and so there is a touch of nobility in this righteous indignation.

Remember that these two men are not called "the sons of thunder" because of the great patience and their great love and their great kindness. These were violent men who just periodically exploded in anger. Aren't you glad we have all risen above such carnal demonstrations?

So these men were already looking down their noses at the Samaritans anyway and they were probably tired and probably hungry and probably wanting to rest and their Lord has been dishonored and He is the God of the universe in human flesh and they are just outraged by this. And they say, "*Lord*," feeling their sort of apostolic oats a little bit,

"Do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

Well what made them think they could do that anyway? They had never done that before. Oh they had healed some people and maybe raised the dead and perhaps cast out some demons, but they hadn't been calling fire down from heaven. So what in the world are they thinking?

Well, I'll tell you what they were thinking, because they knew where they were and they were thinking back to **2Kings 1**. And there- Elijah was in the same region that Jesus and the Apostles were here in Luke 9. And some of the enemies of God got in a situation with Elijah and he called down fire from heaven and burned them up.

The pagan king sends 50 guys down there to Elijah and Elijah calls down fire from heaven and incinerates them as an act of Divine Judgment on their willful rejection and unbelief of the true God.

Back then- it was a time for Judgment. And so the king says, "Well that didn't work- so I'll send 50 more." So the second string guys go down and the same thing happens to them- Elijah calls down fire from Heaven and burns them up too. And so group three was waiting

in the wings and they decide that humble negotiation with Elijah was a far wiser policy. So not wanting to be incinerated like everybody else, they went down to the Prophet and they have a little negotiation. So Elijah was the instrument of God's destructive Judgment against sin in that region at that point in time of history.

And so here in **Luke 9**- the Apostles think that they are “Elijah-like” because they've been called to be the prophets of the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only that- but three of the Apostles were just up with Elijah on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before them. So they had Elijah and his ministry on their minds. And that was part of why they said this.

But the main reason why they said this was because they truly did not like the Samaritans at all and they really didn't care whether the Samaritans repented or not and if the truth is known- the Apostles were probably looking for some reason to manifest their hatred for these people anyway.

And this was a common problem with the Jews that was historic. You see, for the most part- Jews really don't care too much for Gentiles. Never did and never will. And this has to do with thousands of years of a warped and perverted sense of their own Divine Calling before God. The Jews are chosen by God and they know it and the Gentiles are pagan unbelievers who for the most part- are outside God's election and the Jews know that too. They Jew considered the Gentile to be the equivalent of a mongrel dog- who was completely outside the Plan of God.

And so the fact that God had periodically used pagan Gentile Empires to subjugate the Jews because of their sin and rebellion was especially hard for them to take. Israel was surrounded by Gentiles and every time a Jew went to another country- and came back to Israel- he had to first shake the dust of that Gentile land off from his feet before entering back into the Promised Land.

As you know- God raised up the nation of Assyria to judge Israel and to invade them and take away the ten Northern tribes- to never be seen again. Later- in 586 BC- God raised up Babylon to take away the southern two tribes for 70 years. Then the Persians- who are the ancestors of the Iranians- came and took over for awhile and then the Greeks came and ruled the Jew and now here in the time of Jesus- the Jews and the land of Palestine are dominated by the Romans- who

worshipped multiple gods and who practice idolatry and sexual depravity like few Empires before them.

In the first century- it was unthinkable for a Jew to even look at a Gentile when they walked down the street. They wouldn't speak to them and absolutely ignored them. As we have discussed several times- the Roman army was brutal toward the Jew and assaulted them on a regular basis while mocking their religion and their worship.

Like tax collectors- who had betrayed their own people by working for the Romans in exercising punitive tax policies toward the Jews- the Samaritans were looked down on as half-breed dogs who had intermarried with pagan and had forgotten the one true living God.

So as the two sons of Thunder saw the Samaritans reject Jesus- they natural prejudice and animosity against the Samaritans came out and having Elijah on their minds an being approximately in the same region as Elijah had been- it seemed natural for them to ask the question that Luke relates to us in verse 54:

"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

But look at how the Lord Jesus responded to them in verses 55 and the first part of verse 56:

55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."]

Now if you will notice- some of the English translations have this response in brackets. And that is because some of the earliest manuscripts do not contain those words. The earlier manuscripts stop where Luke says,

But He turned and rebuked them,

That is all they say. And what that means is that the words that are in those brackets were probably not in the Original scroll that Dr. Luke actually wrote and were added by somebody- probably a scribe- later on.

And you can debate about this all you want to- but I won't join in with you. That is what those brackets mean. And there are a few places in the Scriptures where that was done- I think about 12. The good news is that we know where every one of them are. And the second good thing about it is that it never involves any serious Doctrine. They do not add any new doctrine and they do not detract from any existing Doctrine- so they are lumped together with what I call, "Translation Difficulties".

We must remember that whatever English version you hold in your hands is a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy of the Original inspired inerrant infallible Scriptures that were written over a 1400 year time frame by 40 men who were moved upon by the Holy Spirit. None of these men wrote a single word in English. They wrote in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek and as you take these words and bring them into English- you have difficulties- which is why you have to either add words or phrases to make the inspire Words clear.

But in every case- those added phrases or words are known to us and they are either put into italics or in brackets or highlighted in some way. Early scribes also added verse numbers and Chapter divisions which are helpful- but they are not inspired either and sometimes actually hurt our efforts to understand what was being written by the Biblical writers and so that is why several of the modern versions try to eliminate verses or de-emphasize the verse numbers and arrange the Scriptures into groups of thoughts or paragraphs.

None of these things change the Bible- they simply help us to understand the Bible. And there are all kinds of superstitious people out there who make up all kinds of legends and stories and legends about these activities and most of them describe dark and sinister plots and conspiracies that are trying to deceive people. And most of them are simply foolish superstitions.

So some people get real nervous about things like this- but we really have no reason to because even if what is quoted here wasn't spoken at this particular moment- a very similar thing was said over in **Luke 19:10** when Jesus said:

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And that quote is not in brackets and so it was in the original. And so this may simply be an effort to link this event here in **Luke 9** with what was said over in **Luke 19**.

But however it is- I'll just deal with what is here in this text. And so Luke 9:55&56a says:

55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

So Jesus rebuked them and said, 'You don't know what kind of spirit you're of.' Or in other words- "You guys are of a different spirit than I am when you say things like that". And this is a powerful illustration of the fact that you can't go through ministry with that kind of an attitude.

You're going to go in and you're going to make a simple proclamation of Jesus Christ and when somebody doesn't accept Him- you want to burn them to death? That's not Christ- like. That isn't of the Spirit of Jesus. Now God can certainly say things like that- but we are not conduct Ministry like that- ever.

That kind of *"Repent or Die Evangelism"* has a lot more to do with the self-righteousness of the minister than it does about God's true anger toward the sinner- but sadly- this kind of manifestation of arrogance and hatred toward the unbeliever is fairly common- especially among those who seem to be striving the most to love and serve Jesus Christ.

We must remember, dear friends, that everything you are in Jesus Christ and everything you have received from Jesus Christ is the result of Sovereign Grace and Sovereign Mercy and has absolutely nothing to do with your own inherent worthiness and value to God. We are all wicked sinners who do not deserve anything at all from the Lord and so any time you find yourself in the Presence of God; anytime you understand the Truth of God's Word; any time you are being used by God in any capacity- you must take heed to yourself that your heart does not get puffed up and that you realize that it is all by Grace and it is all through Faith. The last part of **1Corinthians 8:1** says:

... Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

Now that doesn't mean that ignorance is better than knowledge or that humility only comes by way of being ignorant of Truth- but what it *does* mean is that many times- we learn something in God's Word or God uses us or God answers our prayers or God blesses us and that knowledge activates our own propensity to be self-righteousness anyway and it feeds our natural inclination to manifest self-arrogance and therefore – we take that wonderful and good thing that God has done and we look down our noses at people who either haven't been exposed to that truth or as of yet God hasn't revealed it to them.

And as I said- and it is sad to say- but this is really very common. But the balance that will keep us humble- even as we continue to study God's Word and as we continue to be used by God and we continue to be blessed by God is the knowledge of our own depravity and the realization that we don't deserve and haven't earned a single thing that God has given to us. We get what we get from God for no other reason other than it pleased God to do that for us.

The modern church teaches that we are healed as a result of our own faith or the exercise of that faith- while Jesus says that teaching like that makes you not aware of whose Spirit you are of and the Bible teaches that we are healed when we are healed by the Mercy of God in accord with God's Will. The modern Church teaches that we are blessed because we named that thing and we claimed that thing- but Jesus would tell us that if we think like that- we do not know what spirit we are of and so the Bible teaches that we are blessed for no other reason that it was God's good pleasure to bless us and that it was for God's Glory.

The modern Church teaches that God moves at the sound of our voice and that when we speak- things come into being. But Jesus would remind us what spirit we are of and so the Bible says that only God has the power to create and that we are part of that Creation and so as a creature and not the Creator- we should humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God.

But many times- most times- when God is moving or when God is using us or when we are really pressing into the things of God- we become blind to our own hearts and ignorant of our own sins and forgetful of where God brought us.

And this ignorance and blindness and this forgetfulness will cause us to act just like the Apostles are acting right here. And that is

because sin is such a great mystery to us. But it's a mystery that King David wrestled with in **Psalm 19**. Let's turn there quickly- **Psalm 19**:

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

- 1** The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
- 2** Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.
- 3** There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard.
- 4** Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
- 5** Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
- 6** Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7** The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
- 8** The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- 9** The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.
- 10** They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
- 11** Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.
- 12** Who can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.
- 13** Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
- 14** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

Now in verses 1-6- King David looks up to the heavens first to delight in the Creator's Handiwork. Then in verses 7-11- he looks down to delight in God's Words. But then in very next moment- in verses 12&13- he is on his face pleading with God for Power for victory over his

- 12** Who can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.

13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

So here- about 1,000 years before this event here in **Luke 9**- Israel's most beloved king shows us the very same sin that the Apostles are manifesting in at least two different forms- something David calls:

- A. Hidden faults
- B. Presumptuous sins

One is like a trapdoor that swings out from underfoot, and the other is like a double-door seen from a distance and approached. The hidden sins are sins that are always there- as part of our unredeemed flesh and that always lurk in the background and are released in a moment at the worst possible moments.

But what are the "presumptuous sins" or the "willful sins" or the "deliberate sins"?

Most Bible scholars agree that the "great transgression" that David wrote about in verse 14 refers to his physical adultery or even his spiritual adultery or idolatry. And there is no doubt that these serious sins are included in the term, "presumptuous sins".

But we must also be aware that willful sins like what the Apostles manifest in **Luke 9**- come in various shapes and sizes. So we have to go deeper than merely cataloging them as "bad" sins.

We must ask the question,

How could the Apostles act like this right after they had seen so much Glory and Power demonstrated?

And we are not asking this question to merely find fault with them- but to guard our own hearts and to warn our own spirits lest we do the very same thing.

It appears that presumptuous sins arise from a carelessness with God and His Word along with a carelessness with the needs of others- because we can also be lured into these sins by the willful disobedience of others. The rejection by the Samaritans contributed to the manifestation of sin by the Apostles. Now we can't blame the

Samaritans- but we need to recognize that sinful acts of the part of one group contributed to sinful acts on the part of the second group.

But whatever the origin- over time- without putting these things on the table and looking at them honestly and biblically and brutally- our carelessness will always lead to callousness. And a calloused heart always leads to arrogance or insolence towards God and toward others.

Many people in the modern Church would argue with me about this and reject the notion that truly born again Christians are susceptible to presumptuous sins that knowingly contradict God's Will. But I would ask you to simply read what the fully regenerate writer of this psalm said. David not only believed that as a saved man- he was susceptible to willful sins- he also believed that he was susceptible to being in bondage to them.

So I say to you that truly sincere believers who are doing everything they know to do to be right and to get right and to press into the things of God to run hard after God are especially prone to the very same manifestation of self-righteousness exhibited here by the Apostles in **Luke 9**. And we will not only think like this and act like this- we will also justify it.

The renown 18th Century English Pastor- Charles Simeon said that presumptuous sins are,

“... any sins whatever that are committed against light and knowledge, or on a presumption that God will not punish them in the eternal world.”

Presumptuous sins are a misuse of Divine Revelation and the Gospel and they assume a religious commitment of some level. The great Reformer John Calvin agreed with this when he said,

“The believer, who at one moment groans under the burden of remaining sin and who is aware of the seriousness of sin, is still capable of falling into willful sin, a sin that contradicts what he knows to be true.”

Calvin commented about this very **Psalm 19** and said,

“Unless God mercifully restrain us, our hearts will violently boil with a proud and insolent contempt of God- even as God is very near.”

So there is nothing safe about living in a sin that you know to be wrong.

Presumptuous sins are self-destructive and should be avoided at all costs. The Puritan, Thomas Watson said,

“Christian, when you sin presumptuously you do what in you lies to kill the babe of grace in your soul!”

David saw a difference between sins on the one hand- that we commit because they baffle us and sneak up on us that he calls "hidden faults" in verse 12, and on the other hand, sins that we commit because we presume to know better than God or presume that sin is no big deal- the presumptuous sins of verse 13.

The point is not that there is a special category of extra-bad sins, like murder, rape, treason, etc. The point is that there is a special category of sinning — namely, sinning in arrogant defiance of a known law.

So it's not so much that what you do is what puts sinning in this category as whether you do it with forethought and defiance and rebellion. This is what David calls presumptuous sins. They are fully intentional, with our eyes wide open, and with a heart that says,

“I know God says this is wrong and harmful, but I just don’t care what God thinks; I’m going to do it anyway.”

You really can't get any more arrogant than that.
So how do we fight presumptuous sins?

Do not be content with simply whispering your sin to God in private. It is good to do that. In fact- it is very good. But God offers us something more:

James 5:16

... confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

The Bible teaches that there is a release and a healing that flows from confessing sin- not only to God in the secret place of your heart- but through the humiliation of confessing that sin to another believer in

the Body or even to the person you have offended. We must work hard to avoid the self-righteousness of assuming that we have no sin or assuming that whatever sin we do have is of little or no importance to God or anyone else- lest we find ourselves wishing and asking that God would burn people to death without mercy.

As God's people and as a Church that is serious about our walk with God- we must and we can cultivate what the Puritan's called, "A Culture of Repentance" where it becomes easy to confess sin and where it is easy to ask for forgiveness and a culture where it is easy to admit wrong and easy to see failure in our lives so that we will not harbor evil and wickedness and store it up so that it comes gushing out like it did with these men in **Luke 9**.

The focus that David gives us is on praying for power:

Psalm 19:13a

keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not rule over me...

I believe we can experience complete triumph over presumptuous sin, and that presumptuous sinning must cease to be the characteristic of our lives because God has called us to this and because God gives us the power for it through the Holy Spirit and we will not manifest the unbelievable arrogance that these men do here in **Luke 9**. Now look again at **Luke 9:56a**:

for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them...

Now this doesn't mean that we are tolerant of sin. We are told to confront sin with our message. And even though Jesus was merciful and offered the message of mercy- He was relentless in His confrontation of sin.

But at the same time- He was patient with sinners and merciful toward them. So we must confront sin. And we must call people to repentance. And we must warn them that their sin has consequences. But it is not for us to determine and execute those consequences. That is God's Business.

We are on a mission of Mercy. And all through History- whenever the Church has moved from mercy to executing Judgment- it has

always brought great dishonor to the Name of Jesus Christ. If you go back in history and read about things like the Inquisition, the execution of people who were deemed by the Roman Catholic Church to be substandard, disobedient to the authority of the church, or heretical. The Crusades which were another terrible blight on the name of Jesus Christ because crusaders marching in the name of Jesus Christ went across Europe slaughtering people- especially the Jews.

You can go back all the way to the New Testament and we're warned by Jesus that it's not our responsibility to decide who the tares are and rip them out of the ground ourselves. That is the Work of the Holy Spirit and when Jesus comes back- He'll determine who'll get "barned" and who'll get burned.

The church has even engaged through the years in the execution of infidels- determining that truth was so important that if people didn't come along with the truth- the church actually had a divine mandate to execute them. No less a theologian, no less a man of God than John Owen was the chaplain with the forces of Cromwell when the English went to Ireland to kill the Catholics and this again brought dishonor on the name of Christ.

Some of the Anabaptists were actually drowned by the Reformers who were pro-infant baptism and they decided that if these people wanted baptism, they'd give them a baptism from which they'd never come up. This brought terrible dishonor on the name of Christ.

Through the years the church has jailed sinners, hanged witches, and you can name it. And every time it has been done it has brought dishonor on the name of Christ. We are, as Jesus was, on a mission of mercy. And I only say all that because I want to make sure we understand we're not making an easy truce with sin when I say that.

We must continue to confront sin and call for repentance, but we leave the final determination of judgment to God and as long as we have time, we cease from pronouncing judgment and plead with sinners to receive the mercy that we offer in the gospel. That's the lesson on mercy and how we need to learn it.

Mercy is at the heart of redemptive ministry. Mercy is to extend to all without regard to race, or status, or gender, or age. And mercy is to be offered patiently toward those who are ignorant in unbelief. And by the way, [Micah 7:18](#), "God delights in mercy." And He'll delight in you if you are a merciful Christian.

Let's pray.