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Time to Give the Gospel to Sinners

Luke 9:51-54

51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And 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, just as Elijah did?"

I'd like to read on Luke 9:55, 56

55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner 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 to another village.

Now to give you some background about what James and John were talking about, I'd like you to turn back to Second Kings, Second Kings chapter 1. In the life of Elijah, I like to read the account here of this matter of Elijah calling for fire from heaven, 2nd Kings 1:2

2 "Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria,"

Now get it clear in your mind, Samaria is at this time the capital of Israel, where the northern tribes were gathered together, and so we're talking specifically about the territory of Samaria, that is where Jesus was in Luke chapter 2.

Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury."

Now that name should be very familiar to you because you know in the New Testament it's written and usually pronounced Baal Zebub and it is the one that the Jews were accusing Jesus of being well being the source of his power the one by whom he cast out demons Cast him out by Beelzebub. You say Beelzebub was indeed the God of Ekron. Ekron was one of the five cities of the Philistines. Each of the cities had their own God and the word Baal of course would be a pretty generic term to cover all the pagan worship of that Middle Eastern area but Baal Zebub would be in particular the false god that Ekron worship.

Understand this All worship of false gods really is directed at under in an underlying way to demons. The stump they worship, the Ivory statue, the stone monument whatever that's not a God. But what they're worshipping is the demon of that statue or the demon of that that object and Satan of course applies very willingly Demons and demon power. For those that would worship according to his corruption, according to his hatred of God, according to his his evil thinking, because it really brings them under his control. So as I really was looking for a Word a prophecy from Satan He had sent messengers to Ekron. To get a word from the God they worshipped who really was Satan. And so it says,

2 Kings 1:3-, 4 "3But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' 4Now therefore, thus says the Lord: 'You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " So Elijah departed.

That many Bible scholars and I can see the understanding that these men and women perhaps have of how to understand the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, and there is it seems to me little doubt that at times I don't know about all the time, but certainly many times we could say that the evidence seems clear that the angel of the Lord really is a pre-incarnate evidence of or person of the Lord Jesus the Son of God. This is prior to his incarnation. He had ministry among mankind as the angel of the Lord, so whether that is in every case or not, I can't say, but the evidence is certainly there that it would seem that at times this would refer to him. So I take it that perhaps this is the Son of God himself telling Elijah to intercept these messengers and to say to them exactly what God wants him to say, namely that Uzziah will not recover from his injury and he will die.

5And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, "Why have you come back?"

Well, so you have to read in between verse 4 and 5 the fact that Elijah obeyed the Lord. He did exactly what the Lord told him to do. He intercepted the messengers. He told them:

6So they said to him, "A man came up to meet us, and said to us, 'Go, return to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " ' ' "

Well, the messengers being intercepted never really made it to Ekron to inquire of bills But they returned to Samaria, and that's where you are in verse 5: the messengers return, and the king asked them: Why have you come back?

Apparently, the reason he could say that was because he knew that they hadn't had time enough to get to Ekron and then make the trip back. Apparently, they got interrupted in a very short order after they went out and returned in short order. Why have you come back? So they said to him, "A man came up to meet us and said to us, ' Go return to the king who sent you, you see now. He's sending them back with authority, in other words, wiping out the order of the king to go now. They are being told to go back and say to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' "

7Then he said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?"8So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "That means a king now is I said. It is Elijah, the tishbite."

That's something you can be known by your dress, by all the wild hairiness around your body, and by the leather on your, you know, on your clothing, just a plain leather belt.

9Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him: "Man of God, the king has said, 'Come down!'"

Now understand this is as I was hearing what God has to say to him and deciding. He's going to enforce his own word. He's going to send 50 men with their captain, and they are going to go and get Elijah. And his command is for Elijah to come down, really come down to where the king is. Do you see what that is? It amounts to a forceful denial of God's authority. It means that as I wasn't going to be turned back by this intrusion of this word from God, he was determined to have his own way. Yet this was an injured man wondering whether he was going to live or die. We have to ask sometimes how much would it take for God to reach a certain individual. You know, sometimes there are people that are so stubborn, so set in their way that it seems that there is no way to reach them. Sometimes they have to be hit with physical difficulties and sicknesses and injuries and even sometimes financial disasters and all kinds of things that God can bring into their life.

Satan's well aware of all these devices because if you remember the book of Job,¹ God gave Satan permission to do whatever he would want to do to Joe. Really, to try to get him to curse God. And he brought, remember, boils. Remember the boils he brought against him that was physical sickness, right? He brought calamity to his properties; all of his buildings burned down. He brought calamity to his wealth in his cattle. His camels, his asses, and all that—

¹ Job 1 and 2

all the sheep and goats. They were all destroyed. But worst of all, all of his children were killed, all of them. And in satanic wisdom, he left Job's wife. That was a terrible thing for him to do because Job's wife was set against God. She even wanted Job to curse God and die. She was speaking the message of Satan. Why should Satan kill her? She was his instrument. And so there was rebellion. Rebellion right from Satan; he knew what to use to try to bring people to utter discouragement. All of those things. But it did not discourage Job; it did not reach to his heart. Satan could not affect Job's love for the Lord.

Well, King Ahaziah is using the same kind of devices— physical devices, threat, power. He's attacking. With all that he has, he stands deliberately to stand stubbornly against God. He sends these troops. No sense to be humble. And after that confrontation with Elijah, Elijah's responses are this in verse 10.

10 So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

And rather if I am a man of God, that is important. There, if I'm a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50 men. Fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his 50. Now, really, what he's saying is if God exists. If God is the one that is all-powerful. If God is to be worshipped. If God is really above all. If God has all authority and not feels the above. If he is even above all kings. All governments. All Lords. If he really is God. If God's Word is perfect. And when it's sent out through a human being, one of his servants. If it's perfect, should it be heeded? One of his servants who faithfully delivers that word should it be heeded? (*Obeyed*) He said, " Said this about fire coming down from heaven. If I'm a man of God, he's saying, ' Then let there be proof of these things. Especially this that God is the God of Israel. That God has chosen them for his own purpose for his own glory. And that no one is to be worshipped as God except God, he alone, for he alone is God. And the proof of all this was that fire would come down and consume that captain of 50 and his 50 men. And it came down and it was proof that God is God. Then verse 11 says, ' Isaiah wasn't turned back at all. He's as stubborn as ever.

11 Then he sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men.

And he answered and said to him: "Man of God, thus has the king said, 'Come down quickly!' "

Now, second challenge: you understand the heart of a man. As I thought, he is injured even nigh unto death in his inner man in his spirit. He's stubbornly set against God. Can a human being really be that stubbornly set against God? Yes. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can

know it?"² Jeremiah says. It's hard to believe that the human heart can be so stubborn. He is." I has said, "send a second troop of men to show that he utterly rejects God as God to utterly reject God's authority over him." They try to carry out his orders.

12So Elijah answered and said to them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

Now, if you want to understand a, I am, heart, you look at verse 13.

13Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight.""

Ahaziah in his rejection of God in his stubbornness, his refusal to worship God, his demand for his own authority, His demand for really for Satan's control, and his willingness to worship Satan." He the third time he sends a troop of men. And the third captain of 50 went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and pleaded with him and said to him, " man of God, there's no if in front of this, by the way, if you're a man of God. This is a proclamation, this is a claim, this is a statement, man of God. Please let my life and the life of these 50 servants of yours, of yours, of yours, not the kings, we submit to you. But not so much to you in yourself, but to you as a spokesman of God, and therefore we really submit to God. Be precious in your sight.

This asks the question, really, how precious in God's sight is one life? Not just 51 lives, but one life. You know, Jesus said, ' what shall the profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul?' Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?³ There isn't enough. Even if a man could offer up the whole world before God to pay for his soul. How precious is one? Jesus makes it very clear. Really?" He's saying all of creation is not enough. The value of one soul is beyond the creation. What could possibly be beyond the creation? God himself. You see, it took the Son of God to pay the price for our redemption. He didn't come and offer the whole world or all the starry heavens. It wasn't enough. He came to offer himself a ransom for our soul. This man pleads for his life and the life of the 50 with him.

² Jer. 17:9

³ Matt. 16:26

Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains and fifth of their 50s. Captain of 50s and their 50s, but let my life now be precious in your sight. It isn't Elijah really who speaks at this point; notice it's the angel of the Lord. It's the angel of the Lord that speaks. The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "I grant you this." Not so much that we are to understand that the captain of 50 and his 50 men heard it. But it was God speaking to Elijah. At that moment, go down with him and do not be afraid of him, so he rose and went down with him to the king. What's that saying? This man has humbled himself before God. This man has admitted that he must worship God and only God. And I won't let anything happen to you, Elijah, as you go back to the king. The king has no power over you. Don't be afraid. He went back with them to the king, and so he spoke boldly before the king in verse 16.

16 Then he said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'"

17 So Ahaziah died according to the word of the Lord

All you need out of verse 17 for the first three words is "I died." According to the word of the Lord, "

Now you can go back with me to Luke Chapter 9." And you see the Lord Jesus. See the Lord Jesus here. Answering James and John when they ask if they should command fire to come down from heaven and consume the people that rejected them in Samaria, Jesus answers in 55 and 6.

"You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

Jesus came to fulfill God's supreme love for man with his own supreme act of love in coming to die for man. He came because of God's heart of mercy and desire to forgive man. You see the time for judgment. The time for judgment and death, like that judgment that came down on Hezekiah. The time is going to come. There is a time for judgment and death, and then the second death. Hell will come.

But now Jesus is saying, "Now is the time to bring the message of God's love and mercy to people. This is not the time for judgment to come; it will come, but it's yet future. This is the gracious time that God has given for the message of love and forgiveness and mercy to go out. Let's not hurry God's time clock. With a great display of power, I grant you it was time for a as I. He had shown that in his stubbornness, and God drew the curtain down on a as I. But for these people of Samaria, it's not time.

This is a wonderful time for giving them the gospel and seeking to win them to the Lord because of his love and mercy and forgiveness. We can't go

through this world with a vindictive spirit calling down God's judgment on the people around us. Yes, they're sinners. Yes, they deserve the punishment that awaits them." The awfulness of hell is real. But God loves them, and Christ didn't come to destroy and bring judgment. I mean, if that's what God wanted, he could have called for judgment instantly; all men deserve it. But He sent His Son that there might be hope for mankind and that the judgment that all men deserve wouldn't come upon them that they would admit their sinfulness, humble themselves like the last 50, bend the knee before God, humble themselves, admit that their God, their God, is the God of glory, the God of heaven, the only one that is God to humble themselves and worship him. God wants to give them a chance to do that. And that's why Jesus says, " Son of man, did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." We need to go out with the message of God. Yes, yes, men do know they have to know that they're sinners. They have to know that God loves them, though. They have to know that there is a judgment coming. Yes, it's awful.

But you know, I want you to examine your heart, and I examine my own heart. Especially in light of things that we read of and see on television in the news all the time. There are, I mean, Satan is working evil out in the world. There are some people out there who are filled with hatred, and they delight in killing people and they're merciless. It doesn't matter if they're little children or women or doesn't matter if they're weak and are old. They'll kill them if they don't submit to their power and to their corrupt concept of who God is. There are awful things going on out there. But here's where you have to get your heart straightened out. You might want to call down fire against them and say, " I want to see every last one of them today burned. Destroyed off the earth. They don't deserve to live. The truth is you're right. They don't deserve to live." But as much as it seems contradictory, let me tell you the Lord Jesus would say to you, "But God loves those people, and He wants them to be saved." Yeah, we won't do any good. They won't listen; that may be true. That may be true.

But it isn't ours to call down fire; that's God's business. Ours is to show God's love and to bring them the message of salvation, even if they kill us for it. Our attitude ought to be as awful as those people are, as horrible as they are, as evil as they are, as Satan-filled and Satan-propelled and Satan-consumed as they are, with as much Satan influence as that may be true. They need the love of God in their hearts. They need forgiveness. They need God's mercy, and they need to hear the message. And that ought to be our attitude. To so love them as to pray for them while we, at the same time, recognize their evilness and hate what they're doing, we can still remember the Lord Jesus' turn words. It's not time to call down fire; Jesus didn't come to destroy men's lives; it came to save.

And we need to change our attitude and our hearts and our love for those people, even though they're evil. They may spit at us, but we'll speak the love of God to them.

Pray with me, Father. Thank you. Thank you for giving us this ministry of your love. And help us to love these people that are so unlovely. Those that don't even want to be loved, those that hate and want to be hated. Help us to love them with your love, not to look beyond the awfulness of what they're doing, to hate that Lord but to love them. And somehow support in any way we can, any way to get the Word of God to them by printed page or radio or whatever means we can get the Word of God to them, and certainly by face-to-face contact even unto death. Help us be that willing to get the message out and to be driven by your love to do it. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.