

Set Your Face

Luke · Luke 9:51-56; Luke 9:57-58; Luke 9:59-60; Luke 9:61-62; Isaiah 50:7-9; Revelation 21:1-22:5

AT A GLANCE

Luke 9:51-62 shows Jesus setting his face toward Jerusalem—toward both a cross and a throne—and calling every would-be follower to the same resolve. Scott Grant traces three encounters in which Jesus refuses excuses of comfort, family duty, and delay, insisting discipleship allows no excused absences. The passage matters because it is honest: following Jesus is hard, but the gospel's vindication now and the promised reign in the new Jerusalem make the cost, whatever it turns out to be, worth bearing.

- Jesus 'set his face' toward Jerusalem, an idiom of resolve, refusing every easier path toward the cross and the throne.
- Discipleship allows no excused absences: Jesus places himself before comfort, family obligation, and even a proper farewell.
- The gospel vindicates followers now, in advance of judgment, so hard obedience flows from being already accepted, not from proving worth.

“Whatever the cost it will be worth it.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

Luke 9:51-56 — The time was coming near when Jesus would leave and go back to heaven. He decided to go to Jerusalem. He sent some men ahead of him. They went into a town in Samaria to make everything ready for him. But the people there would not welcome Jesus because he was going toward Jerusalem. James and John, the followers of Jesus, saw this. They said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven and destroy those people?” But Jesus turned and criticized them for saying this. Then he and his followers went to another town. (ERV)

Luke 9:57-58 — They were all traveling along the road. Someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you anywhere you go.” He answered, “The foxes have holes to live in. The birds have nests. But the Son of Man has no place where he can rest his head.” (ERV)

Luke 9:59-60 — Jesus said to another man, “Follow me!” But the man said, “Lord, let me go and bury my father first.” But Jesus said to him, “Let the people who are dead bury their own dead. You must go and tell about God’s kingdom.” (ERV)

[Luke 9:61-62](#) — Another man said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus said, “Anyone who begins to plow a field but looks back is not prepared for God’s kingdom.” (ERV)

[Isaiah 50:7-9](#) — The Lord God will help me, so the bad things they say will not hurt me. I will be strong. I know I will not be disappointed. God is with me, and he is the one who shows that I am innocent. So no one can say I am guilty. If anyone wants to try to prove me wrong, they should come here, and we will have a trial. But look, the Lord God helps me, so no one can prove me guilty. As for them, they will all be like worthless old clothes, eaten by moths. (ERV)

Revelation 21:1-22:5

The argument

Setting the Face — Resolve toward a destination that holds both a cross and a throne

Luke tells us that when Jesus's days drew near 'to be taken up'—meaning both his death and his ascension to the heavenly throne—'he set his face to go to Jerusalem.' Scott Grant calls this 'an idiom of resolve,' because Jesus knows the temptations and easier paths that await him on the road. Jerusalem itself carries two meanings: it is where pilgrims went to worship at the feasts, and where kings were enthroned. Jesus is traveling toward both—toward the cross that fulfills the Passover and toward the throne he will assume at his ascension. Grant presses the application forward: our days, too, are drawing near, and Scripture points us toward another Jerusalem, the new Jerusalem descending from heaven in Revelation, toward which we are called to set our own face with the same resolve.

Insight — Resolve toward Jesus's destination requires refusing every easier path the world offers along the way.

The Year of the Lord's Favor — Rejection answered with grace, not fire

When a Samaritan village refuses Jesus's messengers because 'his face was set toward Jerusalem,' James and John ask permission to call down fire, citing the precedent of Sodom and Elijah. Jesus does not condemn the village; he rebukes his disciples. Grant explains the refusal through Luke's earlier claim that this is 'the year of the Lord's favor'—the era between Christ's two comings is for grace and outreach, not judgment. He traces the payoff into Acts, where Philip later preaches in Samaria and the village 'had not been destroyed... there is joy.' Rejection, Grant says, will come to Jesus's followers too, since we hold values the world rejects, but the response is never vengeance: 'Should we therefore call down fire from heaven in judgment? No, of course not.'

Insight — Rejection for following Jesus calls for reaching out in grace, not retaliation, because this is still the season of the Lord's favor.

No Excused Absences — The immediacy of Jesus's claim over comfort, duty, and delay

Three would-be followers meet Jesus on the road, each offering a version of 'let me first.' To the one promising to follow 'wherever,' Jesus answers that 'foxes have holes... but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'—discipleship forfeits conventional security. To the one who wants to bury his father first, Jesus says, 'leave the dead to bury their own dead... go and proclaim the kingdom of God,' a time-sensitive call overriding even a request Grant concedes is otherwise biblical. To the one who wants to say farewell, Jesus warns that 'no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.' Grant's point: 'you got to place me first... there are no excused absences in the kingdom of God.'

Insight — Jesus's claim on a disciple's life is immediate and total, allowing no delay dressed up as duty.

Vindication and Reign — Why the hard cost is worth it

Grant turns to Isaiah's servant song, where the servant—prefiguring Jesus and his followers—declares, 'Therefore I have set my face like a flint... he who vindicates me is near.' Paul echoes this in Romans: 'there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.' The gospel, Grant says, 'justifies you... declares you right now in advance of the day' rather than requiring you to keep proving yourself. That vindication funds the resolve to follow: Revelation's new Jerusalem ends not with judgment but with believers who 'will reign forever and ever.' Bonhoeffer's last words before his execution—'This is the end. For me the beginning of life'—embody the conviction Grant presses: whatever discipleship costs, the vindication and reign promised on the other side make it worth it.

Insight — Because the gospel has already vindicated you, costly obedience flows from acceptance rather than the anxious need to earn it.

Cross-references

- [Luke 4:18-19](#) — grounds the 'year of the Lord's favor' as the reason Jesus refuses to judge the Samaritan village
- [Acts 8:4-8](#) — shows Philip later preaching in Samaria, proof the village was spared for grace, not destroyed
- [1 Timothy 5:8](#) — cited as the otherwise-biblical family duty the excuse to bury one's father echoes
- [Ephesians 2:1](#) — background for reading 'let the dead bury their own dead' as referring to the spiritually dead
- [Matthew 6:33](#) — paralleled with Jesus's demand to be placed first ahead of family and self
- [2 Corinthians 6:2](#) — used to press urgency on those not yet following Jesus
- [Romans 8:1](#) — read as the New Testament echo of Isaiah's promise of vindication

DEVOTIONAL

There is a moment before every hard road when the traveler must decide which way the face will turn. Jesus, with Jerusalem ahead of him—its Passover table and its executioner's hill both waiting—set his face and did not waver. He knew the villages that would refuse him, knew the disciples who would ask for fire, knew the excuses that would multiply on the road: a father to bury, a family to farewell, a home too fragile to leave behind. He turned toward the city anyway, because past Jerusalem's death lay Jerusalem's throne, and past that throne, another city entirely—one coming down out of heaven, luminous with a life he was going toward on our behalf. We live now with our own roads drawing near, one day always closer than the last, and the same choices multiplying: the comfortable path, the delayed obedience, the reasonable-sounding first. Following costs something real—ask Bonhoeffer, hanged naked at thirty-nine and calling it, astonishingly, the beginning of life. But the vindication that met the servant on his own hard road—'he who vindicates me is near'—already meets us, before the following even proves itself. We are not building a case for ourselves; we are receiving one already made. So we set our face, not toward a Jerusalem of stone but toward the one John saw descending, where the redeemed are told, simply and finally, that they will reign forever. All manner of things, in that city, will be well.

Reflection

- Where in your life right now is a 'let me first' quietly delaying obedience you already know Jesus is asking of you?
- What would it look like this week to respond to rejection or disagreement with the grace of 'the year of the Lord's favor' instead of judgment?
- If you already trust that the gospel has vindicated you in advance, what would you stop trying to prove—and to whom?

Closing prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the indescribable gift of your Son, Jesus, and for his body and blood given for us. As we come to this table, give us what we need today: give us sustenance, and give us a holy exhilaration to follow you. In Jesus's name, Amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

Jesus set his face toward the cross and the throne; following him is hard but, because he vindicates you now, it is worth it.

This week

This week, read Luke 9:57-62 slowly and name one 'let me first' you've been telling Jesus. Bring it to him honestly in prayer, asking for the resolve to set your face toward him without that condition.

Return to [Luke 9:57-62](#)
