

Luke 10:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

Analysis

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. The repetition intensifies the indictment. The Levite likewise (*homoiōs, ómoíōs*) follows the priest's example—religious caste solidarity in neglect. But there's a subtle difference: the Levite **came and looked on him** (*elthōn kata ton topon kai idōn, ἐλθὼν κατὰ τὸν τόπον καὶ ἰδών*), suggesting closer approach and more careful examination than the priest's passing glance.

This makes the Levite's failure even more culpable. He came to the place (perhaps hoping for valuables?), saw the extent of the injuries, assessed the situation—and still **passed by on the other side** (*antiparēlthen, ἀντιπαρῆλθεν*). Knowledge increased responsibility; closer proximity heightened guilt. The Levite couldn't claim ignorance or distance—he investigated and rejected helping.

Why include both priest and Levite? Jesus systematically demolishes religious pretension. These represented the temple hierarchy: priests (descendants of Aaron) performed sacrifices; Levites (from Levi's tribe) assisted in temple service, music, and teaching. Together they constitute Israel's spiritual leadership. If even they fail to love their neighbor, who can claim righteousness? The parable anticipates Jesus' later condemnation of scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23)—religious position doesn't equal spiritual reality. Paul later makes this explicit: having the law doesn't justify; doing it does (Romans 2:13)—and no one does it perfectly except Christ.

Historical Context

Levites occupied a middle position in Jewish religious hierarchy between priests (who alone could offer sacrifices) and ordinary Israelites. They served in temple support roles: gatekeepers, musicians, teachers, administrators. Their religious knowledge and daily involvement in temple worship should have produced exemplary moral character. That both priest and Levite—those most schooled in God's law and most engaged in religious service—failed to show mercy devastates any confidence in self-righteousness through religious activity.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does closer examination of need without responding make guilt worse rather than better?
2. How does Jesus' inclusion of both priest and Levite demolish the idea that religious knowledge or service equals genuine righteousness?
3. What modern equivalents exist to these religious leaders who knew truth but failed to practice love?

Interlinear Text

όμοίως	δὲ	καὶ	Λευίτης	γενόμενος	κατὰ	τὸν	τόπον
likewise	And	and	a Levite	when he was	at	G3588	the place
G3668	G1161	G2532	G3019	G1096	G2596		G5117

ἐλθὼν	καὶ	ἰδὼν	ἀντιπαρῆλθεν
came	and	looked	on him and passed by on the other side
G2064	G2532	G1492	G492

Additional Cross-References

Acts 18:17 (Parallel theme): Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Psalms 109:25 (Parallel theme): I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shaked their heads.

Proverbs 27:10 (Parallel theme): Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.

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