

Luke 17:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Analysis

One returns: 'And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.' Only one of the ten returned. He 'fell down on his face at his feet' (ἐπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον παρὰ τὸν πόδας αὐτοῦ, epesen epi prosōpon para tous podas autou)—full prostration, the posture of worship. He was 'giving him thanks' (εὐχαριστῶν αὐτῷ, eucharistōn autō), from which we get 'Eucharist.' The shocking detail: 'he was a Samaritan' (αὐτὸς ἦν Σαμαρίτης, autos ēn Samaritēs). Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies, divided by centuries of ethnic and religious hostility. Yet the only one who returned to thank Jesus was the ethnic and religious outsider. This demonstrates that privilege doesn't guarantee gratitude, and marginalization doesn't prevent it. Faith and thankfulness transcend ethnicity.

Historical Context

Samaritans were descendants of Northern Kingdom Israelites who intermarried with Assyrian colonists after 722 BC. Jews viewed them as ethnic and religious mongrels. Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem and accepted only the Pentateuch. Jews avoided Samaritans (John 4:9). That nine Jews received healing but didn't return while one Samaritan did exposes the danger of religious privilege—those who feel entitled to God's blessing often take it for granted. Outsiders who receive unexpected grace tend to respond with overwhelming gratitude. This prefigures the Gentiles' enthusiastic reception of the gospel while many Jews rejected it. Election and privilege can breed presumption rather than thankfulness.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why did the marginalized Samaritan demonstrate greater gratitude than the privileged Jews?
2. How does religious privilege or familiarity sometimes decrease rather than increase thankfulness?
3. What does this teach about the relationship between grace received unexpectedly and gratitude expressed wholeheartedly?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτὸς
And fell down on his face at G3588 feet him
G2532 G4098 G1909 G4383 G3844 G4228 G846

εὐχαριστῶν αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν Σαμαρείτης
giving him And him he was a Samaritan
G2168 G846 G2532 G846 G2258 G4541

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:5 (Parallel theme): These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Revelation 19:10 (Parallel theme): And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Revelation 5:14 (Parallel theme): And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Revelation 4:10 (Parallel theme): The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Acts 1:8 (Parallel theme): But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

John 4:9 (Parallel theme): Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.