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Luke

Chapter 10 - An Unexpected Evaluation

Receptivity Put on Display (vs. 1-11)

**Luke 10:1-11:** Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to

you.’ But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’

This is an unusual passage in many respects. The 70 sent out, I don't believe there's any other gospel that records this, which is interesting. 70 more are being sent out at this particular time. We know that Christ had the 12, but here are the 70. Why would that be? And as we go on, I think you're going to find that it just fits perfectly in the Gospel of Luke and why Luke would bring this out in particular. Obviously, different Gospels brought out different things for a different purpose, and all were true from that particular setting and actually revealing certain events that happened that other ones didn't record. John would say, “Look, if we were trying to record everything that Jesus did, there wouldn't be enough room in all of earth to really convey that.” So, as we look at this, we

realize that there's a particular purpose in Luke revealing these 70.

When we look at this, if you look with me in Luke 10:1 at the very beginning, the verse mentioning,

(Luke 10:1) “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others...”

See the way that it's worded there? The word “appointed” is actually used only in this place and in one other place. And so, it is a very unique word that is used in the Greek. *“Anadeiknymi”* is the word that's used in case you want to memorize it. But this word is making reference to something that you wouldn't actually think of. You would think that he's actually dealing with more the emphasis of appointment, but he's actually emphasizing something different. The word itself will be translated in another place, in the only other place that it's found in all of Scripture, in Acts 1. In Acts 1:24, we read that this word is actually translated by the word “show”. So, the word “appointed” is actually about showing something or exhibiting something.

If I could read it this way, “Now after this, the Lord appointed,” exhibits, and that would probably take in both the perspectives of the sense of Him designating these individuals. But the purpose of Him designating them is to exhibit something, to show something, to demonstrate something.

“Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.”

We know that the desire of Christ was to come to His people first in all of Israel. And so, the proclamation of the Gospel must be sent. 70 is not an arbitrary number. We think, “Well, it's a nice round number. 7, okay. Perfect number. That's a good thing.” But 70 has a purpose. In fact, as you go back to the Old Testament, you understand where the whole “70” thing came from. And it actually sort of begins with the children of Israel going into Egypt. And it actually states at the beginning of Exodus that there were 70 children of Israel from the loins of Jacob that go into Egypt. So, it actually began with the 70. Now, from there, as you go further, you realize that

Moses was having a difficult time dealing with all the judging of the people. And so, his father-in-law says, "You need some help." Remember Jethro saying that? "You need some help." And so, what did he say? "Well, you need to bring others in to help you judge." And what does he do? Well, he ultimately brings in 70 other elders. Why choose that particular number? Well, because that was the beginning of the children of Israel. And so, he chooses this number to once again reach out and help and aid the different tribes and the people of Israel. So, he matches it with the 70 overseers or 70 elders in this.

And the interesting thing is, by the time you come to Numbers in this particular setting, and you reach, I think it's Chapter 11, you see these elders coming before God, and God actually places His Spirit upon them, the 70, and they all begin to prophesy. What's also interesting is that it goes on and says this was the only time they did it. So, what is Scripture revealing? Well, it's revealing that God had anointed these for a particular purpose. And so, the question is, what is the purpose? And really, what we're going to find is that the purpose was to display

something. It was to reveal something, to exhibit something. They are exhibitors, and they're there to display something. The question is, what? And the answer is really seen within the text, and that is, who will be receptive to the gospel? And so, they're going out to their people, that is to say, the Jews, and they're going to all the cities there in Israel before Christ comes. And He's going to His people. Of course, it ultimately ends with, "I reached out to you, but you wouldn't have Me." And so, you see kind of the judgment in the text in which He says, "If the things that were done in places like Chorazin or Capernaum or stuff like this, I mean, if that was done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented." So, He begins to reveal their obstinate behavior. And in some way, that kind of ties in with what Luke wants to reveal, that Christ came to save His people, but they were too obstinate in this.

Let me show you an example of that in Luke 4, in which we can kind of see that come into play. Luke 4, as Christ comes into His own hometown in Nazareth, He stands up and proclaims the great message. And I just want to

emphasize the message there that's stated in verse 18, as He opens up the Book of Isaiah,

(Luke 4:18) “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR...”

The good news, which He's called upon us to do. He's not called upon Him to preach judgment. Jesus states that in John 3, right? “I didn't come into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved.

“... HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

(Luke 4:19) TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”

To literally proclaim God's favor upon them.

As you go on in the passage, He sits down, and of course, within the text, up to this point, everybody's kind of applauding and very thankful about that wonderful, wonderful word of God's favor upon them. But as He goes

on, He says, “Yeah, but what about this?” And He tells them something that they don't want to hear.

He states this in verse 22,

(Luke 4:22) “And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

Luke 4:23) And He said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’”

(Luke 4:24) And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

(Luke 4:25) But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;

(Luke 4:26) and yet Elijah was sent to none of them...”

That is to say, to none of the women of Israel.

“... but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”

In other words, he was sent to one that was a Gentile.

(Luke 4:27) “And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

Now, at this point, they want to kill Him. It says that all in the synagogue were full of rage. They led Him to the brow of a cliff to throw Him down, and of course, He eludes them. What is Luke telling us? That He came to proclaim even in His own hometown in Nazareth where He was born. But He also stated, “I tell you that you're going to be just like it was in the Old Testament. Because there were many in Israel that needed help, but there was nobody whose heart was open to it.” And He states that with both the Syrian and the Zarephath, who was a part of Sidon. Luke will continue to reveal this.

And so, as we come to this passage, what we have is an interesting narrative that describes God displaying the receptivity of His people. Are you going to be receptive to the message? That's the question. And the message is very clear that He doesn't go into great detail about the exact words that are used, but He sends them out, as it

were, almost like Judges, i.e. the Old Testament, you have the 70. Of course, this is where the Sanhedrin come from. There were always 70 Sanhedrin, and, as well, 71, the seat of Moses. So, they had one that was the seat of Moses. And this is why Matthew 24 says, “You all want the chair of Moses.” In other words, the highest chair in the Sanhedrin, which they were all seen as supreme court justices. So, you have these that are making judgment calls to the people. And of course, they're rightly dividing what is true and what is false. So, God is sending out these, we'll call them judges of sorts, to evaluate whether or not these are truly wanting to come. And how do you know? Well, it's how they will respond to the message. What message? You're going to see within the passage, it is the message of peace, if you look at the passage.

Like I said, He doesn't go into great detail about the message itself, but He says this in verse 5,

(Luke 10:5) “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’

(Luke 10:6) If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.”

Here again, not a lot of detail in that. Now, what we know is that the word “peace,” whether it be “*shalom*,” or in the Greek, “*eirēnē*,” both make reference to a sense of well-being. So, what God is literally bringing is His favor. Because the Jew knew very clearly that you couldn't have peace without the well-being of God. In other words, God placing goodness upon you, His favor being upon you. It was impossible for you to know success.

I oftentimes think of the passage in Romans 5:1,

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And you realize that for the wicked, as Isaiah will say, there is no peace. They're like tossing water. They're always stirring up the refuse of the bottom of the sea. But with us, we can have the peace. And Christ will oftentimes use that word “peace”. “Peace I leave with you, not as the world gives.” And so, it is the message of peace. The point is that this gospel that we're proclaiming is a very unique gospel, not like the other prophets that were proclaiming oftentimes the judgment of God; this is the message of the gospel of peace. And it needs to be clear. It needs to

be very accurate because this is what's going to judge whether or not somebody is drawn to Christ and is going to be saved or not. It's a very interesting point within the passage.

So, as we come to this, He sends them out, as it were, as those that will evaluate in some respect, the receptivity of those that are there.

It reads in verse 2,

(Luke 10:2) “And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send...”

You might want to underline the words “to send”.

“... out laborers into His harvest.”

I would think that if He uses the word “send,” He would use *“apostolos,”* where we get the word “apostle”. I would think that would be the word, nope. He doesn't use that word. He uses the word *“ekballō,”* which actually means “toss out,” “throw out.” Let's put it another way, “repel out.” And it seems as if what God is doing is pushing people out. So, in other words, pray that God

would push people out. We don't naturally go into harm's way to proclaim a message to a world that's hostile to it. We have to be pushed. I had to be pushed into the ministry. Because who wants to stand up in front of people and talk? They say that's one of the greatest fears. They actually say the fear of making a speech in front of people is greater than death for most people. But the point is that God is gracious to push us. And He moves us. And He has to expel us out. And He says, "Pray that the Lord of harvests would do that, that He would actually call such ones." And you begin to realize that He's calling these ones that are going to go to their own people that, for the most part, are going to reject the message that they're going to proclaim.

In fact, the way that He describes it is, in verse 3,

(Luke 10:3) "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."

So, we're not talking about things that are going well. The description, I think, is extremely accurate in the sense that you must not go out to harass or intimidate people. In other words, the message that we're proclaiming is the

grace of God, and it's the kindness of God that leads men to repentance. And that's the message that we want to proclaim. I think sometimes people can be pretty much involved in harassment and obnoxious in their pursuit. Of course, Paul kind of went that way when he first was saved. But the Lord began to deal with his heart and soften his heart. But the point is that "I want you to go out as lambs. I'm going to let you know, I know that there are hostile forces out there. And there are people that will devour you. There are people that are going to argue with it. They're going to want to debate." As we read in 2 Timothy, as it goes on in that particular chapter, he says, "Refuse these foolish and ignorant speculations. There are going to be people that just want to win an argument. You just go out as lambs proclaiming the gospel." So, He literally sends them out in defenseless ways. No wonder He has to push them out. And you can just see those sheep, "Don't push. There's a lion out there." But He then goes on and describes certain things He wants them to do and certain things that He doesn't want them to do. And here again, it's all going to fit in to what I would say is the evaluation process.

It is very important that we not only proclaim the word of God, in case you missed it, go back to Luke 4, and you'll see it again in Luke 7, but you see Christ as He opens up the prophet Isaiah, verse 18,

(Luke 4:18) “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,

AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

(Luke 4:19) TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”

That's the message.

You see the same thing when John the Baptist goes, “How do I know you're the guy?” And He ultimately says, if you look in Luke 7:22,

(Luke 7:22) “And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed,

and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.”

That's the gospel of peace. I mean, is there anything in all of that that says you're condemned? It just says, “We came to free you. We’ve come to set you free.” And that's the gospel that they must preach.

Now, here's the point. In order for this to be legitimate, in order for this gospel to work, and we know that in passages like John 10, Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice, and they come.” So, the ultimate point of that is that word is not focused on the words themselves, but it's focused on the way that the words are proclaimed. We know what the words are, they're very clear. There's only one salvation, Christ. He is the Good Shepherd. But “My sheep hear My voice,” well, the inflection of the voice is what they're listening for. So, in order for us to make this word understandable and for them to receive it or reject it legitimately, because we're evaluating their response, we have to make sure that when we proclaim it, we do it right. Because oftentimes what people are rejecting are not the gospel, but the way you're doing it. And if you go

out there trying to cram it down their throat, then what are they rejecting? Well, obviously they're not rejecting the grace of God; they're rejecting the intimidation of you. And so, it's very important the things that we do in the proclamation of this gospel. I've seen people walk away after they've just made a mess of the whole gospel scene, and they're going, "I guess they're not going to be saved." I'm going, "I don't think they heard it." So, once again, in order for the judgment to be legitimate, it has to be this way.

So, the way He describes it is in verse 4,

(Luke 10:4) "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way."

Now, the "greet no one on the way" means you have to go with great resolve.

Much like if you look in Luke 9:51, where Jesus starts heading to Jerusalem, it says,

(Luke 9:51) "When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem."

People need to understand that you're going with purpose. You start going and talking with everybody that comes along, you're there to kind of meet friends, and “I want people to like me,” and after a while, “Why did I go on this trip?” So, there has to be this kind of resolute, “I know what I'm doing, I know why I'm going,” and people need to see a sense of purpose in your life. If you're just kind of sashaying along and bouncing from one conversation to the next, what's the purpose? So, you don't want to confuse that.

As well as, if you look in the passage, “carry no money belt,” which means that you're not trying to supply all of your needs. What's the peace of God that comes upon you? What is that peace? Well, the peace of God is that He'll take care of me. Oh. So, you're not taking care of you. Now, you're telling people, you're walking up to people and saying, “I believe God is the God of peace. He takes care of me. He's the supplier of all my needs according to His riches and glory. I wonder if I have enough money to make it through the day.” And you start digging. He says, “You don't worry about those things.”

See, because if those things are things that we begin to worry about and then we preach about the all-sufficiency of Christ, the message gets mixed up. Why is it these televangelists love money so much? That's a good question.

So, as it goes on, “no bag,” which the bag would be, actually, probably better translated, “beggar bag.” That is to say that you're not going around asking for money. Here again, I know at this juncture I probably knocked off almost all the ministries, but if you're asking for money, then how is it that you believe that God is the One that supplies you? If I have to go around asking people for money, then do I really believe that God is the One that supplies all my needs according to His riches and glory? Wouldn't it be better if I just went to Him? I mean, let's cut out the middleman. Let me just ask Him. Let me walk by faith. We're telling people, “Walk by faith, have peace with God, trust in Him,” and we're doing this? So, the way that you go is pretty interesting. Once again, it's to make sure that you're not messing up the evaluation process,

because you're going to give a message, and we don't want them in any way to misconstrue that message.

“Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes...”

In other words, extra shoes that you would be carrying just in case those wear out. And don't get sidetracked.

And then He states this in verse 5,

(Luke 10:5) “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’

(Luke 10:6) If a man of peace is there...”

In other words, the man that is actually seeking well-being, looking for good, opens the door; we're not talking about a person that is good. We're talking about a person that is seeking peace. You're going to come upon a lot of people in your daily walk, and some people are going to be steeped in their sin. But you're going to proclaim the peace of God, and you're going to say, “Do you want this?” And they're going to go, “That's what I've been looking for all my life.” It's exactly what the woman at the well was saying, “I've been looking for this.” The question is, are you posing the right question?

“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’

(Luke 10:6) If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him...”

I like the way this ends in verse 6,

“... but if not, it will return to you.”

Which means the God of peace will still bless you.

I remember when I first went door to door, and you know, people really don't want you going door to door anymore anyway. I wasn't that fond of it, but nevertheless, when we were going to door to door, we'd have people slam the door in our face, and I'm sure they had Jehovah Witness and Mormons coming too, so I'm sure they were pretty upset; people selling things all the time as well. But we'd have somebody slam the door, and at first I just felt so bad, you know, it's so terrible. I've been rejected, you know. And you can just hear God in this text, “Don't feel rejected. My peace has come upon you. And you've done what I've told you to do. You've been faithful to do the things that I've told you to do.”

And there's a peace that God places on your heart, if you do it for the right reasons. If you're concerned about the response of people, and at first I was, then you're going to end up being depressed most of the time. But if in fact your desire is to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," the peace of God is just going to shower upon you. You're going to feel the glory of God come upon you. And it's a wonderful thing. So, if in fact there's a rejection, then it'll return to you; it'll be placed on you.

(Luke 10:7) "Stay in that house..."

That particular house that does open the door and is longing for peace.

"... eating and drinking what they give you..."

In other words, you're not trying to receive what is beneficial to you, but you're trying to, in some way, return the hospitality by accepting whatever they offer. And it just shows that you're not looking for something out of this, but you're receiving.

Now, the way that it actually reads here is very interesting,

“... for the laborer is worthy of his wages...”

And what Scripture is saying is, you don't want to take a beggar's bag. But if the Spirit of that person's heart wants to give to you, then they see you as earning this, because you brought them something that was valuable to you. It's very interesting. And here again, it's the same thing with church. I don't think the church should ever beg. We should never ask for money. But if the Spirit of God moves your heart, you should give. And we should receive that as a wage for proclaiming the gospel, as Paul will even say to the Corinthians.

So, it goes on and says,

“Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.”

By the way, the Jewish realm is Oriental; in the Oriental custom, a stranger would come into town, and that stranger would shift from house to house to maybe even get better gifts. And the way that the community would oftentimes do is they then would begin to compete with one another over who gave him more or which house was

the best. And they say that feuds have erupted because of just the visitor coming to town. So, what is Christ doing? He's just alleviating the whole feud thing, and He's alleviating the whole exploitation thing in the sense that the minister should never be looking for a better house, "I wonder if they have a better queen-size, king-size bed, maybe." And looking for that better opportunity. This is the house that opened the door. This is the house you stay with. Be more concerned about the relationship than you are about the benefits that you can receive. And I know that sometimes people look for the fringe benefits in ministries. Stop it. Don't do that.

So, it goes on and says,

(Luke 10:8) "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you."

No specific diets.

(Luke 10:9) "And heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

The rule of God. This is God's hand that's come upon you. And here again, what have they done? They've received

you. They've opened up their arms. They said, "This is exactly what I've been looking for." And they've received the great, marvelous benefits of the gospel.

(Luke 10:10) "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,"

Which is very interesting to me. This is a public declaration. Could you imagine? You went to a city, and they rejected you and you go, "Okay, I need the bullhorn." And you get out in the middle of the town, and you go, "These guys reject it." And you can hear the judgment call of the 70. That's what they're there for. They're actually giving the judgment. These will not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. Now, what's on the platform and really what's on display is the grace of God, the peace of God. And our thought is that if you proclaim the peace of God, then there's less retribution if you don't receive it. And that couldn't be any more false. In fact, there's a greater penalty for rejecting grace than there is Law.

I'll show you the passage. If you turn with me to Hebrews 2. Hebrews will hit upon this in several ways, but if you

just pick up with me in Chapter 2, as the writer of Hebrews will say, “A son is greater than a servant,” in Chapter 1, and now he's going to say, “This gospel of peace is far greater than the message of the Law.”

He writes this in verse 1,

(Hebrews 2:1) “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

(Hebrews 2:2) For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,”

What is he talking about? He's talking about the Law.

(Hebrews 2:3) how will we escape...”

All right, so we've just gone a notch up. The one rejected the Law, and whoa. Did you see what happened in the Old Testament when they rejected the Law?

“How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

(Hebrews 2:4) God also testifying with them, both by signs...”

I would say, by the healing, as they went into the different communities.

“... and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

You actually tasted of the kindness of God, and you rejected that?

He's going to hit upon this in a number of different ways. One is found in Hebrews 6 as well, if you turn there.

(Hebrews 6:4) “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,”

Which the Holy Spirit is the picture of God's grace.

(Hebrews 6:5) “and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

(Hebrews 6:6) and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”

Does it sound to you like there are greater ramifications to rejecting grace than there is the Law?

Go with me to Hebrews 10:26,

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

(Hebrews 10:27) but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

(Hebrews 10:28) Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

By the way, that's the reason why they're going out by twos, bearing witness.

(Hebrews 10:29) “How much severer...”

Okay, now we're stepping it up, once again. There's a comparison and contrast within the text.

“How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by

which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?"

Why do you think the passage ends this way,

(Luke 10:10) "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

(Luke 10:11) 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'"

Wow, this is quite an intense thing. And so, what you have within the passage is a sense of receptivity being put on display. They actually come out in the streets and they go, "You rejected it." I've oftentimes heard people, "You know, whether I love God or not, that's a personal thing." No, no. You're going to stand before everyone. "Don't deny Me before men; I'll deny you before the Father in heaven." No, your faith is not a personal thing. Oh, you receive Him personally as a personal Savior. But no one receives the Light and hides it. See, that's what He's already stated, right? And ultimately, as Christ would go on to say, nothing is hidden that won't be revealed. So, what they are doing is they're revealing. Now, you can call

yourself a closet Christian, but God's going to bring it out on the streets. You and I don't have that option. And this is one of the things that the passage is saying. It's going to be revealed. We're going to put what you really believe. And, you know, people like to ride that fence and, "Well, I don't really believe anything." Well, the question will come, did you receive Him? And the answer, "Well, I'm sort of thinking about it." Okay, so you didn't receive Him. And that'll be announced. What Scripture is revealing to us is the necessity of proclaiming the clarity of this gospel, which is the gospel of peace, there's no doubt about it. It's the favor of God. And how should we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

So, I would say, number one, as we go out, we want to make clear what the message is. And when you go out and you begin to talk about the kingdom of God, I wouldn't go in talking about all the lists of things that God wants you to do. You can go through a lot of lists of things that people need to change. But I would say this, if in fact they receive the gospel, God will even begin to burden their hearts to change those things before you even

mention them. So, what is it that we need to proclaim? Well, you need to proclaim God's favor. You need to proclaim God's grace. You need to proclaim His forgiveness. You need to proclaim His desire even to save. God desires to save. I mean, there are people out there that are searching for some sort of hope. And so, we proclaim this message that God has the power to make things right. That whole concept of peace is God has the power to give you a sense of well-being. You know how your life is in turmoil, it's all twisted up? Your past is haunting you, the guilt of the things? God has the power. We come with the message, God has the power to give you a sense of well-being. God has the power to make things right. Literally, as one of the great points of our gospel, that we know that God creates all things new. So, that's like a new beginning. Now, here's the point. If a person can't receive that, there's nothing else to say. I know people think, "Well, I got to talk them into, well, they need to change their life. At least they can change their life here." It doesn't matter. Scripture will say they're dead. They're dead in their trespasses and sin. So, you're talking to a dead man. Dead men aren't going to

respond to the truth. This is the message that enlivens. And it's that gospel that you need to make clear. Now, here's another point. If in fact you proclaim this message, you need to make sure that you don't send mixed signals.

Let me have you turn to 2 Corinthians 2 just in regard to this. Don't you think it's strange that the very message that is proclaimed to one group is seen as horrible, and the same message proclaimed to another group is seen as wonderful? Paul makes mention of this in this passage in 2 Corinthians 2:14.

(2 Corinthians 2:14) “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma...”

I would probably put it in the context of what we've been talking about, this smell of evaluation. Do you like the smell? Okay, you're one of His. Do you repel the smell? You're not.

So, the way it reads is,

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

(2 Corinthians 2:15) For we are a fragrance of Christ...”

I don't picture fragrance as being terribly invasive, but I do see it as being something memorable. They say that you'll forget many things, but a smell you don't forget. So that when you're walking someplace and you pick up that particular smell, it almost immediately takes your brain back to a thought or an event that tied that smell to that event. It's interesting. So, God has so ordained that we would be that fragrance.

“For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

(2 Corinthians 2:16) to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.”

You want to make sure you get that smell right. And how do you do that?

Well, if you look at the next verse in verse 17,

(2 Corinthians 2:17) “For we are not like many, peddling the word of God...”

If you go in this process, trying to get something out of it, trying to vie for position, trying to compromise in some way, trying to benefit you in some way, they're not going to hear the message. and you're not giving them the evaluation that they need. There needs to be clarity in this. And that means you go in this wanting nothing, expecting nothing, and I would say in that context, being hospitable, kind, generous, thoughtful of the people you're with, but with one resolve. Not to talk about everything else under the sun, but to talk about the love of God. And if you'll make this clear, then how they respond to that will actually be literally the litmus test of whether or not they're receptive to it.

“For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

In other words, the only one we want to please is God. We want to make sure that we get this right.

Paul will continue in this vein, in particular in Chapter 4, as he says that we've received this ministry of mercy.

And he states in verse 2, if you look,

(2 Corinthians 4:2) “but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God...”

How do you adulterate the word of God? You sell it, you use it, you manipulate it for your own benefit. This is why it's very important. We were talking about those in discipleship. And it's always disconcerting to me to realize that people will study Scripture just so they can have a one-upmanship and somehow show themselves right in a particular argument with no benefit to proclaim the goodness of God and the grace of God. They'll take advantage of other people while they get their degrees and get their diplomas and get the things that might seem to deem that they are in the ministry, but the only thing they've done is adulterated the word of God, because they're not doing the very things. I mean, fundamentally, when you look at the deacons and elders, you have to be managers of your own household well, which means you

can't abandon them right off the bat, right? I mean, you've got to be faithful where you are. I mean, if you're going to be declared faithful in the sight of God to minister, you've got to be faithful where you are. So, the home is really the beginning of this, and it gives the evidence of this. So, your life has to so shine. And unfortunately, I hear people, they've been in this church, and they've been to that church. We oftentimes have people come in the new members class, and I ask them, "Where did your walk with Christ begin?" "Well, I was in this church, but these things began to happen, and there was division, and there was strife, and there was immorality." And I'm going, "Wow, it's a wonder they're still in church." It's a wonder, because the message was never proclaimed clear enough to where they could say, "I receive it." And that's what He's calling them to do. It's a wonderful picture of God sending out, I would say, the 70 judges of the children of Israel going into the cities and clearing the way and finding out, "Are you one of His?" And there has to be that lifestyle in order for that to be true.

## **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for this word, in which it reminds us not only of the simplicity of the message that You proclaimed to us, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, because You died on the cross for my sins, because You paid the price for my sins, I have peace with God through You. How marvelous that is. Who would not embrace that? Unless indeed it was somehow obscured or somehow adulterated by the one that was proclaiming it. Lord, we give You thanks that Your message is true. And Lord, may we proclaim it in a way that would enhance this wonderful truth as we would live in truth and proclaim in truth this good news that You love us. With that, Lord, we realize that there is a responsibility to every ear. And as Peter would say, for some it would be better for them not to have heard than after hearing to reject. And so, we have now the clarity that's been given to us. The question is, what will we do with the grace of Jesus?

