

Session 10 Harmony of the Gospels

INTRODUCTION

“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled” (Lk. 12:49b, NASB). “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished” (v. 50, NKJV)!

Jesus was really distressed emotionally about the suffering. He didn’t appreciate what He had to go through. He wasn’t excited about that. He knows what it means to say no to His own desire. He was greatly distressed. He sweated great drops of bloods. He had to leave heaven to come down and manifest Himself. He was under such intense warfare.

“CAN YOU NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?”

Verse 54. He said to the multitude, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time” (Lk. 12:54-56)?

He’s exhorting the people to grasp the serious consequences of not recognizing the many warnings of God to walk in faith and obedience. Those signs should have been just as obvious as the weather signs. The Messiah was in the world and they couldn’t recognize all the fulfilled prophesies, not even with everything that was happening. He’s rebuking them for the seriousness of missing what God is doing in the present tense.

MAKE YOUR PEACE WITH JESUS BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

Verse 57. “And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right? For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison” (Lk. 12:57-58, NASB). The opponent is Jesus. The magistrate is the Father. “On your way, make an effort to settle with Him.” Make your peace with Jesus before it is too late. Why? In order that He may not judge you before the Judge, and the Judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. He says, “I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent” (ibid, v. 59).

You’re starting to realize that Jesus uses the same verses in many, many different contexts. He used this somewhere else talking about forgiveness. It’s the same little story, the same words, but a totally different meaning. The prison they were headed for was judgment from Rome. In 70 A.D., Rome came in and judged the Jewish nation because they didn’t receive the Messiah. The Father turned them over to judgment. In this whole passage, up to and including Luke 13:5, He’s talking about how if they didn’t repent as a nation they were going to come under judgment. He’s talking about a judgment in this world by the Romans. It certainly happened in 70 A.D.

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE, THE VINEYARD, AND THE NATION OF ISRAEL

In verse 6, He begins telling them a parable. A certain man, the Father, had a fig tree, Israel, which He planted in a vineyard, the world. He came out looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the vinekeeper, Jesus, “Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?” (Lk. 13:7). Three years was the length of Jesus’ ministry. “I haven’t found anything. Cut it down.

Why does it even use up the ground? It's getting in the way of the Gentiles receiving the things of God." The whole Jewish religion was getting in the way.

"But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down'" (Lk. 13:8-9).

Jesus says, "Let me pour forth the Spirit." There came the greatest revival that ever shook Jerusalem. For a year or two, the Spirit of God was poured out heavily. That was the fertilizer. "Then We will see if it bears fruit."

They still rejected it, so they were judged by Rome. The thing I like about this is something I learned about the way of judging people. When people deserve judgment, sometimes it's right to step back, have mercy, use a little fertilizer, and give them another shot at it before you make a judgment. Then if they don't repent, you have to cut it down. You have to make the judgment that's necessary. It takes a fig tree three years to come to maturity. The nation of Israel was a picture of a fig tree. Or, rather, the fig tree was a picture of Israel. Jesus ministered for three years, but they didn't receive it. They bore no fruit. He said, "Let's get rid of them so that the Gentiles won't be hindered by them. This fig tree is taking up ground and getting in the way."

This is the real move of God across the world. He removed the Jews out of the way so that the Gentiles could come forth fully.

JESUS HEALS A WOMAN WHOM SATAN HAD BOUND FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS

Verse 11. There was a woman who had a sickness caused by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent and couldn't straighten up. Look at verse 16. The devil is the one binding people with sickness. It's a spirit. They do that kind of stuff. He just broke the power of the spirit and the woman was healed. The woman wasn't demon-possessed. You can have a very mature soul in God, you can be holy and loving, but your body can be afflicted by a spirit. Sometimes when we pray for someone, we say, "Satan, we bind this spirit."

The person thinks, "I'm demon-possessed? I don't understand...?"

No, you can be afflicted without your soul being afflicted.

John 9. The next event. The whole chapter is the account of the blind man being healed. There are unlimited riches that I haven't tapped in John 9, because I haven't seen that far in this chapter. I guarantee you that John didn't spend an entire chapter given the details of one healing without something dynamic being locked up in there. I just didn't have time to look for it. I know it's there. Whenever they put that kind of attention on one healing, it's a picture of the Church or a picture of revival or a picture of something. There's something fantastic in John 9.

It's the same with John 11—the healing of Lazarus. These are two tremendously detailed healings, and it's not just for the account in and of itself; there's more to it than that. I know the Scriptures well enough to know that. I haven't gotten the heart of either one fully. I want to stir your minds up to really dig in there.

NOT ALL DISEASE AND SUFFERING IS THE RESULT OF PERSONAL SIN

Jesus lays hands on the man and he's healed. In verse 2, they want to know whether this man was born blind because of his own sin or the sin of his parents.

Jesus said, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (Jn. 9:3).

If there was no sin, then sickness and death would never have existed. Pinpointing every sickness and every calamity to a particular sin of a particular individual is a wrong and unbiblical thing to do. If one of you comes under a sickness or calamity, it doesn’t necessarily mean you’re the one who sinned. The devil has authority in this world to move. He challenges and attacks. Sometimes it’s the devil attacking and prevailing. Jesus corrected the common belief that all disease was a result of your personal sin. That wasn’t true, though it can be true on occasion. Some people are sick until they repent.

JESUS PERFORMS A CREATIVE MIRACLE

Verse 6. He spit on the ground and made clay for the eyes. Then He commanded him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. This was a creative miracle. The man was born without a functioning part of his eye. A healing removes something that hinders health. In the case of cancer, you remove the presence of cancer. Healing removes something that’s there, that’s in the way of wholeness and health. A miracle adds something that hinders health and wholeness. One removes and one adds. This guy didn’t need the cancer or the flu to be removed. He needed something created in his eye that was never there from his birth. He never had the functioning part of his eye there. Since man was originally made from dust, Jesus takes dust, for the breath of God comes on the dust. He creates the missing part of that eyeball from the dust and puts it in his eye. It was a creative miracle.

THE MAN DEMONSTRATES FAITH BY GOING TO BE HEALED

He tells the guy to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The guy goes and washes. It was a real demonstration of faith. If you confess the name of Jesus, you get kicked out of the synagogue. Jesus comes into town; you’re brought forward, and you don’t know who He is. He spits, puts something in your face, and tells you to go do something. Some blind people would have been disgusted and angry and wiped it off. This guy demonstrated faith. He looked foolish. All his friends are looking at him and thinking, “Are you really going to go and wash? You’re actually going to listen to this Guy?”

There really was a demonstration of faith for him to leave what was happening and not be angry. That was a humiliating thing for someone to do to you. With a spirit of rejoicing and faith, he did what Jesus told him. His enemy was going to reproach him because he dared to act like that was right. His faith was rewarded. He had a lot more faith than anyone could see. That was an embarrassing situation, but he believed what Jesus was saying.

“HE WHO ENTERS BY THE DOOR IS THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP”

Page three. John 10. This is an allegory in the context of the events of chapter 9. The blind man was one of the sheep. The Pharisees were the thieves and hirelings. It’s all in the context of this healing. It caused a tremendous division in Jerusalem.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (Jn. 10:1). It’s a relationship of faith and obedience to Jesus. The fold of the sheep is the remnant of Jews who would be saved by submitting to Jesus. You had to come through Jesus to come into the fold.

“But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (Jn. 10:2). This is the person who enters by the way of faith and obedience. Because there were some leaders—in particular the ones from the previous chapter—who were never commissioned by Jesus to be leaders. In the Church, we have some men, even saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, who haven’t been commissioned by Jesus. They’re sneaking in another way. This really becomes a leadership chapter, too. These men entered into leadership without a divine call. They’re not Holy Ghost-equipped shepherds.

There were a lot of people in those days who wanted to enter into the prominence of leadership, but they didn’t come through faith and obedience. They had faith and obedience. God didn’t call them to be a shepherd. So they weren’t in obedience in being a shepherd. To the one who is truly called, the sheep will hear that man’s voice. He will call his own sheep by name and he will lead them out. He’s talking about men, not Jesus—men under Jesus who were going to have sheep; those sheep hear his voice and he will call them out by name.

THE SHEEP HEAR THE VOICE OF THE ONE SENT FROM GOD

The doorkeeper here is Jesus, the One who determines the shepherd of His flock. The sheep will hear and respond to the genuinely called man who is anointed. God will join those sheep to the man, heart to heart. When a man truly has a call, heart to heart, God is going to place in the hearts of the people the ability to hear that man.

I’ve had people come to me and say, “Hey, I have a call to leadership.” The problem is that no one was hearing them. No one was responding to their leadership because the head Shepherd didn’t give those sheep to you. To try to function as a leader without having this anointing is a very difficult thing to do. No one will “hear” you. You can say, “How come no one accepts my gift? How come no one receives my ministry?”

Some people go from church to church and they think everyone is against them. The problem is that the doorkeeper hasn’t opened the door to you and therefore the sheep won’t hear your voice. You can go from place to place, but nothing is going to change. The doorkeeper is the One who has to open the door to you. You can’t just get a ministry because you want one—especially in a leadership role.

It says, “God will join these sheep to the man heart to heart.” This can’t be manipulated by men except in a superficial way. I know people who try through enthusiasm: they knock on doors, they do anything to get people in the church so that their church can be a bit bigger. They try to manipulate a crowd. There’s just a lot of energy, and it won’t work in the end. The thing that keeps the work together is that the people hear the voice of the shepherd and their hearts are knit. It’s a supernatural thing. It has to be there, or it isn’t there.

“AND THE SHEEP FOLLOW HIM, FOR THEY KNOW HIS VOICE”

Verse 4. “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers” (Jn. 10:4-5). They simply won’t respond to the man who isn’t called of God for that place. They’ll flee from him because they don’t know his voice. This man hasn’t been genuinely called by God. He can’t force people to follow him. It can’t happen. They simply won’t follow. He doesn’t possess enough spiritual authority to motivate response from the people of God. In the end, the people won’t fully respond.

I've really received this in terms of my own ministry. You can't push, you can't force, you can't do anything to cause people to respond. It's either there or it's not. Jesus said, "If you don't come in by My way, people simply won't respond."

I read this a while ago and said, "Praise God. I'm never going to try to manipulate loyalty or response of people to my ministry. That's futile in the end. It's a supernatural thing." God has given you a heart to hear from the people to whom He joins you. The most anointed man in the world could come in here, but your heart won't leave and join to that man, though he's more anointed than any of us. Why not? Because God hasn't given you to that man. Or you could be so tremendously anointed, and you think, "How come no one is responding to me? I can do way better than that guy over there. I can preach way better than those guys up there."

If God hasn't given you those sheep, they just won't respond. As good as you are and as anointed as you are, it doesn't make any difference; they won't respond in the end. Why not? Because God hasn't given them to you.

Verse 8. "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jn. 10:8-9).

"THE THIEF DOES NOT COME EXCEPT TO STEAL, AND TO KILL, AND TO DESTROY"

Then in verse 10, He's going to describe the devil's ministry in comparison to His own. The devil came only to steal the Word of God from you. That's number one. He comes to steal the Word of God from you. That's his number one ministry, to steal the Word of God. When the Word of God is stolen from your heart, then he can—literally!—kill you and destroy you. That woman was under oppression for eighteen years and no one could liberate her until an anointed man came on the scene. He really, really wants to kill you. He really wants to destroy you, and he'll do it by first stealing the Word from you. He will hold you in bondage the rest of your life, and all your sincerity can't make a difference.

Jesus came to bring life in an abundant measure—the total opposite. The thief is the devil. Stealing, killing, and destroy is what the devil seeks to do to the sinners and saints. Same devil, same ministry. A saint without a firm revelation of the Word is robbed. This will literally result in death and destruction while he dwells in this world. The devil can't get you when you go into the eternal city. As long as you dwell on his turf, he can ruin you. Don't think you're immune because you're sincere and baptized with the Spirit of God with a genuine heart; it makes no difference. He will steal the Word out of your heart, destroy you, and have dominion over you.

Jesus' point is this: any leader that allows this process, any leader who will allow his people, through not teaching them properly, to be killed and destroyed, is being used by the devil one degree or another. This can apply to sincere, godly men. There are godly men across this nation who steal the Word of God out of the hearts of the Church. As sincere and godly as they are, people in their ministry are being destroyed by the devil and no one can stop it. They're being used by the devil. They're sincere and godly—they still have reward in heaven to a measure and God still loves them—but they're not wise to what is happening before their eyes.

"I HAVE COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND . . . HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY"

Jesus came to bring life—that supernatural quality of life. The miracle-working life: the abundant life. I like to say "an abundant anointing." It's that *zoe* life, that anointing that dwells in you. He came so that we could walk in the abundance of the anointing; so that we could always understand where blessing or conflict comes from. The abundant anointing flows from God.

Death and destruction comes from the devil. He lays it out in verses 12-13. The hireling is not a shepherd. He doesn't own the sheep. When the wolf comes, he will leave them. He will flee. The wolf will snatch them and scatter them. He's a hireling and not genuinely concerned about the sheep. Hirelings diligently serve. A hireling is a very diligent server, but he serves in order to get a pay check. There's nothing unrighteous about that. There's nothing wrong with serving diligently in order to get paid. He doesn't truly carry the sheep in his heart. He therefore won't risk great danger when the wolf comes, for the sheep or for the paycheck.

I make my \$300 a week here. My life is on the line here. Because he's working for his \$300 a week, it doesn't bother him to move out of the way when the wolf comes in. He's a hireling. He pays for hard-earned, honest money. He gets honor and money for serving. There's nothing wrong with this as long as you don't mistake that man for a shepherd. So you never count on him and trust him. He's serving for a paycheck.

There are a lot of people in the Body of Christ who only want a paycheck, and they're not really shepherds. They need to see in their mind that there's a difference. Someone has to do things around here that don't necessarily require a shepherd's heart. Maybe it would be possible to get the guy to put the parking lot in. He's doing it for the paycheck. He doesn't care about the sheep. He serves the body for pay. There's nothing wrong with that.

Let's make sure that if we want a staff position that we aren't after the money, but that we have a heart for sheep, or at least we're honest enough to admit in our heart, "Hey, I'm not interested in the sheep. I just want a nice job. They pay well, don't they?"

“OTHER SHEEP I HAVE WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD”

Verse 16. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold" (Jn. 10:16). He's speaking of the Gentiles. They knew that Jesus was calling the Pharisees and religious leaders hirelings. They were in leadership positions for money. They weren't interested in the sheep. The thing I really want you to get is this thing about the sheep hearing your voice. The sheep won't hear your voice if you're not genuinely called of God to operate in that thing. They simply won't hear. You can strive and struggle all you want, but you won't have the respect and flow from men's hearts.

“IS IT NOT WRITTEN IN YOUR LAW, ‘I SAID, “YOU ARE GODS””?”

He goes on, and I think this is a very good verse. Verse 31. They take up stones to stone Him. He says, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me" (Jn. 10:32)?

They say, "For blasphemy" (v. 33)—because He's a man who claims to be God.

Jesus says, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"?' If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Jn. 10:34-36)?

In Psalm 82:6, God called us to be the gods of this world, small 'g'. We gave our position to the devil, we gave him our authority, and therefore the devil was then constituted god of this world. Why? Because he took our position. We were the gods of this world until we ceded authority to the devil. That's how he became god of this world. Luke 4 shows us it was handed over to him by Adam. Adam handed the dominion to Satan. If he can

become the god of this world by getting it from Adam, guess what Adam was before he gave it to the devil? He was the god of this world. God called us before the fall to be small gods under Him. Nothing would have dominion over us but Him. That's what constitutes you as being a god.

It sounds like heresy. It kind of scares me every time I say this, but it's the Word of God. The thing that constitutes you being a god under the Father is that nothing else can rule you. If nothing else can rule you, then you're a god. Everything is subservient to you. If a person totally is mature in faith and obedience, he will rise up into a position of having total dominion and nothing can rule him. In a very real sense, not in a figurative sense but in reality, they're functioning as gods of this world. That's a heavy passage. But it's very clear, and that's the confusing part. "Who am I?" Have you ever asked yourself that question? That's the whole revelation of being a son of God. We walk in the same measure, the stature that belonged to Jesus.

"THOUGH YOU DO NOT BELIEVE ME, BELIEVE THE WORKS"

Verse 37. "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (Jn. 10:37-38). If Jesus submitted to this standard, we must submit to it, too. If we can't come up with the miracles, we have no reason to tell the world they need to believe. If I don't do miracles and I'm not functioning as a god, then don't believe what I'm saying. That was a hard statement for me to write out. It comes against my own heart.

Luke 13 makes me desperate. You need to do some chewing on John 10:34. Oh man: I tell you, it has never dawned on us who we are. We have a weakness mentality. None of those things can rule you when you find out who God made you to be.

THE CONFLICT ESCALATES AS HE APPROACHES JERUSALEM

Now He's getting ready to leave Jerusalem. He's finished with His three months in Judea. There's this heavy conflict in Jerusalem. Everywhere He went, they wanted to kill Him right away.

Verse 22. "He went passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way back to Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:22, NASB). Now He's in Perea, on a three-and-a-half month tour. These are the last three and a half months of His life. There's strong opposition in Jerusalem—strong! He just went down there for three months—from October to December; from the Feast of Tabernacles to the Feast of Dedication. He was totally rejected by the leaders.

He has to wait until Passover. He spends three and a half months in Perea, which is next door. He came as the Lamb to be slaughtered on Monday. They always have the Passover Lamb on Monday. He prepared for the slaughter on Thursday. They were passing through. This is His one Peraan tour.

"STRIVE TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE"

Someone says, "Lord, are just a few being saved?" Because all the Jerusalem leadership rejected him. That's what promoted this question.

Jesus said, "Well, strive to enter by the narrow door. Many, I tell you, will seek to enter and won't be able" (Lk. 13:24, paraphrased).

He's talking about on the last day. He's not talking about people in this age; He's talking about Jews when they stand before God. There's something some of you might not understand. It's this. This is kind of a hard thing to get across. You and I are going to have the identical consciousness and personality that we have now in eternity. We could literally have this session in the eternal city right here. We could get up and have a family reunion. We could listen to the Scriptures and you could learn like you're learning now. We have this concept that when we pass from this world into the eternal world, everything is different. It's not. You'll have minds; you'll learn and have conversations, you'll remember the past.

Exciting things will happen. Terrible things we will see: people being thrown into the lake of fire. There's going to be a lot of arguing. Some people are going to say, "I deserve to be there." We're going to watch them cast into the lake of fire before our eyes. We will see friends and family members in unutterable anguish and screaming, taken by angels and cast into hell. We're going to watch that with our own eyes, and they'll watch us enter into the eternal city with the precious stones and jewels. They'll scream and holler when they see it. The whole world will be there, just as sure as we're sitting here now. We're going to have more revelation of God and an eternal body.

Don't have some funny concept that everything is going to be in some mystical form. Humanity will exist as it does now. We're in the eternal city instead of the lower world. We change worlds from lower to higher. We get a new body so that we can endure the eternal world. Nothing happens besides that. You'll grow in the revelation of God. You won't be perfectly full of the knowledge of God. You'll grow forever in the knowledge of God. I don't doubt the Scriptures will be there and we will still continue to receive the riches of God in the Scriptures forever and ever.

This book is eternal. It's the Word of God. It has to last forever. I don't doubt that we will all have the Word of God; we will study it and learn it. We will learn new things sitting at His feet. He will give us a little here and there—a little at a time.

“THERE WILL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH”

The head of the house rises up and shuts the door. That's the Father. These are terrible words of finality. The door is slammed. Boom! He's talking to some of those people in Perea who were Jews and were going to reject Him. They'll say, "Lord, Lord, open up to us." He will tell them then that He doesn't know them.

The message is clear: "You had better get your act together now."

"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'" (Lk. 13:26). To fellowship with someone in dinner was a sign of permanent friendship.

"You were in Galilee; You were in Perea. You sat and ate the food my wife cooked." There will be a lot of arguing on that day.

He will look at them and say, "I don't know you. I don't recall you."

"How can You deny me there? I gave You that food. I'll tell You what it was. You ate two hamburgers, and You ate a desert afterwards. What are You talking about?"

“I don’t know you. Leave now.”

The door will be shut and there will be no entrance. Then He’s going to say, “I tell you that I don’t know who you are. Depart from Me, you evildoers” (Lk. 13:27, paraphrased). There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He says, “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out” (v. 28, NKJV). In other words, “When you’re witnessing the angels dragging you to the abyss, you’ll weep, scream, and gnash your teeth. You’ll say, ‘My God, it was real.’”

Here’s the point I want you to see. Every sinner in this world is going to see that day, and they will watch us receiving glory. We will see them thrown into the lake of fire. It’s going to be a tremendous scene. It’s not going to be a twenty-four hour day. It will probably take a long period of time to experience the whole process of judgment. Every man is being rewarded openly before God for his righteousness and diligence. He will go through all creation and reward them openly in front of everyone. At the end He’s going to throw them into the lake of fire. I’m talking about a sober, serious day. I know this is supposed to be a preaching session, but you can’t really help it. I’m thinking, “Give me a break here! This is pretty heavy.”

On that day, Matthew 7:7—“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mt. 7:7)—won’t work anymore. It will never work after the door is shut. It will never be opened again once it’s locked. It’s not the same dispensation. The time for saving prayer is finished.

WHAT WE CALL PRAYER NOW, WILL BE RELATIONAL BUSINESS IN THAT DAY

Verse 27. Everyone will long to be in His glorious presence when His glory is unveiled and clearly seen. Sinners and saints will want to talk to Him face to face in His glory. The same presence is available today. We call it *prayer*: when we stand in God’s presence and talk to Him. We call it a conversation. It’s prayer here or prayer there. God is going to give us portions and rulership over all parts of the universe. Probably He will create many more universes. When we’re talking to the King of kings, Jesus, about our kingship, over a certain part of the universe, really we’re praying. We’re just praying. We’ll call it business. Prayer is no different. The only difference is that you can see it then and you can’t see it now. Men don’t desire to pray now, but on that day, the greatest judgment will be not being to fellowship in prayer with God. True prayer will be forever out of their reach. This is a good definition of hell. A good definition of hell is no opportunity to enjoy the royal fellowship of prayer. Many think it’s hell to live a life of prayer now, but in that day, it’s going to be hell not to be able to live in prayer. For eternity you’ll be able to contact the Father face to face. In eternity, you’ll spend your whole eternity in prayer. It’s not silent prayer, not secret prayer; it’s prayer in His presence.

A lot of people think, “What a terrible life to live in prayer.”

But the thing that will cause weeping and gnashing of teeth is being denied this privilege. All the sinners long to be in His presence and pray, but they will no longer be able. Hell will be not being able to pray ever again—not being heard by God ever again. They will be thrown into the lake of fire. There will be gnashing of teeth and horrible anguish when prayer is forever out of their reach. The unsaved will see the redeemed before they’re cast into outer darkness. The knowledge of what they could have had will be a source of great anguish to them. Men will long to pray and be in the glorious fellowship. They’ll see themselves removed from His glorious presence. All prayer is right now is me getting a little ahead of time, living in the eternal city in my heart. My

body can't get there, but my heart can get there. When our heart and body join together, that's living in the eternal city. It's still prayer; there's no difference.

“THERE ARE LAST WHO WILL BE FIRST, AND THERE ARE FIRST WHO WILL BE LAST”

Verse 29. “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last” (Lk. 13:29). These Jews, the very people on whose streets He walked, will be thrown out and never able to enter His presence again. The first were the Jews. They were the first who had opportunity. They had the Old Testament. They'll be thrown in hell. They're last. The last ones are the Gentiles. They were the ones who never had the Word of God, but they received Jesus and came into the eternal city. There are some neat things after this.

Luke 14:1. He's at the house of one of the leaders. He's in Perea. He's eating with one of the guys. They'll say on the last day, “Lord, You ate in our house.”

“Yea, I still don't know you.”

MAKE FRIENDS WITH THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO FRIENDS

Verses 7-11. This is a parable about humility and promoting yourself. Read that yourself. In the next parable, verses 12-14, He talks about the need to be impartial. “Don't just invite people who will invite you back, but rather go and get the people with no prominence: the blind, the crippled, the lame” (Lk. 14:12-14, paraphrased). Really what He's getting at is this. He's talking about people who aren't publicly honored by men. The blind, the lame, the crippled were people whom the others considered to be gross sinners. No one liked them. They were the outcasts of society because they were judged by everyone. They had no friends unless they were their own friends out there.

When He said, “Invite the lame,” He isn't necessarily telling us today to go invite lame people, though that's okay. The point He's making is this: “Go and invite people who have no honor or prominence at all before men. They have no way to repay you. They can only be grateful in their heart. That's the most they can give you. Invite them and you'll have great reward. You'll be repaid by giving your heart, finance, and time to people with no prominence.”

God doesn't give you much honor or reward at all; there's a little reward for honoring a prophet. The reward for hanging around a prophet is that he will help you now. The reward for hanging around a man truly anointed is that you get the benefit of his ministry. There's not much eternal reward for hanging around a prophet. If you want an eternal reward, hang around people with no prominence. I want both of them. I want to hang around the prophet and get his reward now, and I want to hang out with people of no prominence and get honor in eternity. Take advantage of this insight and I promise you that you'll have a higher standing in eternity if you use this parable. Make friends with those people who have no friends. You'll receive a standing in eternity that's higher, literally higher than if you don't. It's a blind ticket—a blank check. He says, “You can have as high a standing as you want. Go love those people that no one else loves.” It's a pretty easy way to get exalted in eternity. It didn't cost much. Maybe you don't get as much honor or get to hang around Billy Graham or the big guys when they come in town. In eternity, you'll be a lot closer to the throne. You may not be close to the big guy now, but you will be then if you play your cards right.

This concept of eternity presses my mind constantly. What we do now affects our eternity so directly.

THE PARABLE OF THE FATHER AND THE WEDDING FEAST

Someone pops up and says in verse 15, “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Lk. 14:15)!

Jesus says, “Now that you’ve changed the subject, let’s talk about the marriage feast. A certain man was giving a big dinner” (Lk. 14:16, paraphrased). This is God the Father. The big dinner is Revelation 19. Did you know that you’re literally going to eat? You’ll eat food in eternity. Never again will there be dieting. You’ll drink the fruit of the vine. We’ll forever settle if it’s wine or grape juice. I don’t care one way or the other, really. The point I’m getting at is that you’ll eat. It’s a big, big feast. Eat as much as you want.

It’s interesting. Do you remember Luke 12? The parable where Jesus said that the Master will come and gird Himself and serve those people. Jesus is the Bridegroom. He’s going to get up off His high seat and wait on people in eternity. They’ll be honored greatly in the multitudes and multitudes at the banqueting table. How would you like to be there, with the Lord Jesus in radiant glory saying, “Can I give you anything else?” Everyone in eternity is looking at you. I can see you, blushing; six billion people looking at you.

You’re thinking, “Yes, I’ll have some more water please.”

He’ll leave. The next person will say, “Why didn’t you ask for something big?”

“I don’t know? I got nervous. I didn’t know what to say. He was right there. I was surprised. I didn’t know I was doing that well when I was on the earth.”

He’s going to get up and serve some of you, face to face, just like that. He won’t do that to a lot of us. He will love us and we will be in His kingdom. At that feast, He’s going to serve some of you personally. He’s going to get up, walk down that long aisle, come to your place, and stop. He’ll do something special with you. Oh Lord God! He who is wise, let him have ears to hear. Wouldn’t it be great to have all of us up there? Having to be stuck at one big, long table because every one of us deserved that? That would be glorious. That could be true. That really is a reality. Some of you think I’m living in fantasy world. That’s not true. There’s going to be a big dinner.

“COMPEL THEM TO COME IN, THAT MY HOUSE MAY BE FILLED”

He sent to his slaves, and everyone was invited. He told them the feast was prepared and ready. They began to make excuses. One had bought land; another had bought oxen. Another had gotten married. I want to say this. I’m not joking. A lot of people when they get married go on vacation for a year or two. That’s not a good thing to do. Being in love is exciting. Being engaged, having a girlfriend, all that’s exciting. Don’t go on vacation because your emotions are fluttering a little. Eternity is still coming. Just because you’re all excited and have a ring on your finger for the first time, it doesn’t make any difference. Eternity is the same difference away. It’s not very far. Just remember that, OK?

The slave came back and reported to the master, “Hey, no one is coming.” The Father said to the prophets and to the evangelists, “Go out to the streets. Bring in the poor and the blind. Bring in the not-prominent ones. After that, go out and get the Gentiles and heathens. Go get everyone. I tell you that none of those who were invited shall taste of this dinner” (Lk. 14:23-24, paraphrased).

He's talking about Jewish leadership. He's sitting at their table having dinner with them. He looks them right in the eye and says, "You're not going to taste it. The people with no prominence are going to and the heathen, the dirty, Gentile dogs are going to get it and you won't."

That's pretty heavy for some of those prominent religious leaders. Too many men are looking for prominence in the wrong kingdom.

DON'T ABANDON THE RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO YOU

Verses 18-20. All those excuses are valid responsibilities unless God is calling you to drop them. The first man was providing a home for his family. You had better do that: it's a valid responsibility. The second man had business. He was providing food and money for his family. The third one was his marriage. Marriage is a serious priority in life. When the Spirit of God tells you to do something, He won't tell you to forsake your marriage. When He tells you to do other things, you had better obey the Spirit of God. Those valid responsibilities aren't valid if He tells you to do something different. He will always take care of you if He commissions you to let something slide one way or the other. These people made some bad mistakes because they took valid responsibilities and exalted them in the place of God.

I think marriage is great. Marriage is exciting and all those kinds of things. Marriage isn't the eternal God. You know what I'm saying? Most people need to take a higher priority in marriage. My wife isn't God. I enjoy her; she's sweet and all those things, but Jesus Christ is the one who redeems me. I appreciate her, and we need to be coworkers to deliver men in this age. You don't want to lull yourself to sleep under valid responsibility. At the same time, you don't want to be irresponsible.

I have the opposite problem. I need someone to get up and say, "Hey, but they're valid," and they are. "You had better be responsible because you'll be judged according to those things, too."

Wisdom is so important—to know when to and when not to. Wisdom becomes more precious than gold, the book of Proverbs says (Prov. 16:16). Wisdom is something we need desperately to secure a high position in eternity. You need wisdom now to make right decisions. You're condemned so easily on either side. "I'm not spending enough time with my family." "I'm spending too much time." You don't know where you're at. You need wisdom which is more precious than gold. Get in the presence of God and you'll get it.

NEVER LET ANYONE GET IN THE WAY OF YOUR DEVOTION TO THE WILL OF GOD

He's in Perea, during the last six or ten weeks of His ministry on the earth. Verse 26. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:26).

He's in His last weeks of His ministry. The standard is getting very high. He wants to discourage any false, superficial commitments. These are His last big statements on the earth. A man has to hate his own life. He has to hate his father, hate his mother, hate his family, hate his wife, hate his brothers and sisters in comparison to his willingness to submit to the will of God. This is not to hate them in the absolute sense. When the will of God says do not, and your wife says do, you had better pat your honey on the head and say, "Sorry honey, I have to go do what the will of God says." You need to be gentle, loving, and wise, but you still need to hate your wife in comparison to commitment to the will of God.

Those are words of sober truth that you don't hear that much. You'll find nine times out of ten that the Word of God is going to tell you to be committed to your wife. I'm talking about heart decisions, not the outward things you do. Because the will of God is to love your wife, your family, and everyone. What He's talking about is this: when it comes to a point of loyalty, when the crunch comes down to the wire, you had better hate everyone compared to the will of God. He isn't really talking so much about relationships between Christians; He's talking about when an unbeliever comes in and tries to influence you, or a carnal family member tries to pull you back in the world.

He will disciple you as personally as He disciplined Peter. Wouldn't it be great to live in the times of Peter? No, because these are the days of the double anointing. You can have the same personal discipleship that Peter had. Paul proved it. Paul never knew Jesus in the flesh. Paul was as clearly his disciple as Peter was. He was disciplined by the Spirit of God in the same way you and I can be. Paul was the perfect example of hating his family and life in comparison to his unwavering commitment to the will of God.

You can get this stuff out of balance. Probably none of you will. Probably most of us will get it underbalanced in loving our lives. Some of you are thinking, "Oh no, this is really going to freak some people out." I'm sorry, it's the Word of God. Jesus said it, not me. The problem is that in the end, people still lean the other way. We love our life. We love our wife. We love our family. When our family gets in the way of the will of God, we normally cling to our family because we sometimes love them so much more than the will of God. The problem is, you can't really be a disciple and do those kinds of things. That's what we're stuck with. We're talking about a radical kingdom. We're talking about God doing something radical like the Son of God leaving eternity for thirty-three years. The whole thing is radical. It's radical.

“AND WHOEVER DOES NOT BEAR HIS CROSS . . . CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE”

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Lk. 14:27). The cross is saying no to every desire that's in conflict to God's desires. You and God share a lot of the same desires. You want to be blessed. God wants you to be blessed. Don't get this idea that you have to be bummed out all the time. A lot of your desires are given by God. Some of you are prospering in your business, and it's because God is telling you to do it. Don't get into confusion. When your desire is in conflict with God's desire, that's when the cross comes in.

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’” (Lk. 14:28-30)?

He's talking about a person who wants to launch out and build a big ministry. “We're going in faith to build a new building! We're going to reach into some great new tower!” You had better sit down and count the cost to see if you have the discipline in your spirit to have the anointing to finish that tower. A lot of men endeavor great works, but haven't counted the cost yet to see if they can finish it. They have these great, outlandish programs. They never counted the cost to know what it would cost them in terms of their personal life in God to have that thing fulfilled. They become a joke and a mockery. People look at them and laugh.

He's talking about undertaking any kind of big project. It's going to take prayer, fasting, holiness, obedience, self-sacrifice, and denial. Count the cost before you endeavor in the big worldwide ministry or you'll look silly. He says, “Otherwise when he has laid the foundation, he won't finish and people will laugh and say, ‘What a

joker!” He’s presumptuous enough to believe that God’s blessing would be on him to that degree without thinking that he had to submit to Him like the Lord Jesus did.

“Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand” (Lk. 14:31)?

We’re kings and we’re going to encounter the devil. We’re going to make some attacks against the devil. We need to take council with other kings. Speak with those who are walking with God in a very serious and devout manner and see what council they can give you. That’s what it means: kings speaking with kings. In other words, find those few people in this world who have that superlative commitment. No valid responsibility will sidetrack them. Go to those people and council with them and ask them the price they paid to be a successful king. In other words, subject yourself to those who truly hate their own lives. I can do that by reading books about them and the price they paid. I want to take council from men who hated their life, and I want to see if I’m willing to pay that kind of price before I go head out against the devil in some big old program. I want to see how other men lived who hated their lives. I read that and take council against myself or for myself. Then I either take a shot against the devil or I back away from the devil and say, “I’m not ready to claim the city yet. This costs too much.”

He’s telling you to calculate the cost: consider or spend some time talking with men who have paid the price so that they can tell you the price of it. That’s why I read a lot of David Brainerd. He’s a king who hated his life: he paid the price, and I know what it cost him to have what he had.

I look at that and I think, “I don’t know if I’m ready to take a city yet.” I don’t know about that.

Verse 32. We need to be ready, don’t we? Here’s the only other alternative. While the king is still far away, the other king you’re going to attack sends a delegation and ask for peace. Before you’ve made an outright attack against the devil in the city, if you’re not really willing to pay the price, back away and leave the devil alone for a while. Have peace while you have a chance. Don’t make any great attacks against any great kingdoms unless you’re willing to count the cost, and have talked to people who have paid the price to see what it really costs to become a successful warrior.

Page seven. So here’s the bottom line: no one, *no one* can be an anointed disciple unless he or she gives everything. When a man or a woman comes on the scene who does this, we make a hero out of them. That’s the standard of radicalness to which God has called us.

Verse 34. This is related to what Jesus just said. “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Lk. 14:34-35). A Christian without the power flowing through him is useless in terms of delivering the afflicted or attacking another kingdom, namely the devils. A saint without power flowing through him is as useless as salt without flavor. If the salt doesn’t have flavor, why put it on your meat? It can’t make the food better. It’s powerless, ineffective. Throw it out. You’re going through the motions for nothing.

A life of ministry without an anointing of God and deep devotion is useless and as ineffective as salt without flavor. He who has ears, let him hear. The point He’s making is this: “Don’t become ineffective by loving your life. Press in the full measure.”

I don't want anyone condemned, but I want everyone pricked in your heart. It's a real balance. Because you need to love your wife, your family, your life in one sense. But we need to have this instantaneous commitment to the will of God. I don't care whose feelings are hurt. The will of God is at hand. That's my brother, but it makes no difference; the will of God says to go the other way. I have to hate my brother and do the will of God.

Chapter 15. Parables on the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Jesus is illustrating the Father's attitude towards sinners. This is fantastic. The Jewish leaders didn't have compassion on sinners. They only had condemnation. This is the sure sign of religious death. That's the sure sign of religious death, when you have condemnation and not compassion on sinners.

Just read chapter 15; it's easy. Get the heart of the Father. Really weigh your heart over that Luke 14 stuff. It's powerful. The most powerful thing about Luke 14 is the absoluteness of the words. "You cannot be. . ." "Hate and love. . ." The absoluteness of that chapter absolutely blows me away. God bless you.