

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 10:5 - 10:10



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses Matthew chapter 10 where Jesus sends out his disciples to freely heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. Gregg explains that although it may take weeks or be protracted, the people need to be prepared to have a chance to enter the kingdom of God. He highlights that there is no obligation for ministers to charge for their services and discusses how early Christian documents mention that a minister who asks for money is considered a false prophet.

### Transcript

In Matthew chapter 10, we have the first time that Jesus sent his disciples out. In particular, this was the 12 apostles. There was another time later when he sent out 70 disciples.

But on this occasion, he sent out the 12 apostles to go to various villages on their first preaching and healing tour. On this mission, they were given the same authority and power to do what he did. Apparently, he sent them out on this mission so that they could cover more ground than he would be able personally to visit, at least in the same amount of time.

But we found in Matthew chapter 10, in verse 1, that he called his 12 disciples to him and gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Upon doing so, we find him giving them this charge. In Matthew 10, verse 5, he says, These 12 Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying, Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bags for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor staffs, for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there until you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it, and if the household is worthy, let your peace

come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And whoever will not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. Now there's some interesting stuff here.

Now Jesus sent out his disciples on a preaching mission. This was a short-term mission, and we do not know how long it lasted. It may have been only a couple of weeks, or it may have been more protracted.

But we can see that he gave them instructions with a very simple message. Now by the way, we have to remember that even at a time much later than this, the apostles did not have a very clear understanding of the gospel as we know it. For example, at a time considerably later than this, Jesus told them that he was going to die and rise again in three days, but they argued among themselves saying, what did he mean by being raised from the dead? In other words, they didn't understand that he would die and raise from the dead, even though he told them.

They didn't quite understand. They thought he was talking in riddles or something. And so they didn't even understand the gospel as we do, that Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead.

At this point in time, they had a very simple message. One might argue that if people would ask them very many questions, they might be at a loss to go beyond this message because these men were barely trained and didn't know an awful lot about what they were talking about. But he did tell them that they would just go and preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This was a little bit like what John the Baptist had done to prepare the way for Jesus. And that is perhaps why they did this. They didn't have too much to say.

They didn't know very much of the program. But they did know that Jesus said the kingdom of God is at hand. And by going to these places that Jesus was not immediately going to go to, they could awaken these villages to the fact that the time of fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah was near.

And these people might not know immediately who Jesus was, and probably they would ask. I imagine these apostles would be asked many questions. What are you talking about? What's the kingdom? And so forth and so on.

And they would probably tell what they knew, which wasn't too much. They might say, well, this guy named Jesus, he's going around healing people and casting out demons, and we believe he's the Messiah, and it's the time of fulfillment, and so forth and so on. But they wouldn't know too much more.

It would remain for a later date for the full gospel to be understood and to be preached to them after the day of Pentecost, in all likelihood, when the apostles would then go out with a fuller message and know more of what they were going to say. But these people would have been prepared. They would have been awakened.

They would have been stirred by the announcement that the time was soon going to be that the kingdom would appear. And then, of course, on the day of Pentecost, after the kingdom did arise, they could go back and say, now, we told you it was coming. Here it is.

It's here. You can join right now. Sign on the dotted line.

Actually, it's not a matter of signing on the dotted line, but the point is they could then be given an opportunity to enter the kingdom of God. It's not clear that these disciples had any other message then that the kingdom of God was breaking into Israel's history at this point in time. And they were given the same miraculous abilities that Jesus exercised himself in order to prove it.

You see, Jesus told them in verse 8, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Now, obviously, all those are the more stupendous kinds of miracles that Jesus did. Raising the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out demons.

These were very much attention-getting miracles. And it's clear that Jesus was able to give these disciples, at least on this occasion, temporarily, the power to do what he did so that they could demonstrate what he demonstrated. Well, what was he demonstrating? At a later time, in Matthew chapter 12, Jesus mentioned that, he said, If I'm casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come, has overtaken you.

He said that in Matthew 12, 28, I believe it is. And so Jesus indicated that his ministry of casting out demons was a visual announcement that the power of the kingdom of God had arrived. And no doubt, as the disciples were going around saying, The kingdom of God is at hand, and then they were casting out demons and raising the dead and doing that kind of stuff, that would also convey the same information.

Now, notice he didn't say, Tell them about me. Preach the name of Jesus to these people. And I find it rather surprising that he did not.

But perhaps the reason he didn't is because even at this point, the disciples would not be in a position to answer very many questions about who Jesus is. I believe their own understanding of his deity had yet to really dawn on them. I don't think they had truly formed that much of a detailed understanding of who Christ was.

They didn't know anything, of course, about the second coming or about the crucifixion, because those things were way off in the future for them, and they didn't know they

were even coming. They didn't know in all likelihood about the virgin birth or about very many other things. They only knew that Jesus, as far as they understood it, was the Messiah, and that he was bringing in the kingdom age, and that's about all they had to say.

It would remain for a later time for these regions to be reached by evangelists like Philip and like Peter later on in the book of Acts to go into these same areas and to preach the gospel there. Now, initially he says to them in verse 5, when he sends them out, Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans, but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Now, he told them to limit the range of their outreach to the children of Israel, and not to go to the Samaritans, and not to go to the Gentiles. Now, this is not to suggest that Jesus had no concern about the Samaritans or the Gentiles. In fact, Jesus himself had already, prior to this, done some tremendous evangelism in a Samaritan city, and we read of that in John chapter 4. But the main purpose of Jesus coming initially was to fulfill the promises that God had made to his people Israel, and therefore they were going to be the first to hear it.

God, as it were, had a prior relationship and a prior commitment to them, and so he was going to give them at least the first chance to enter into the kingdom of God. Now, many of the Jews did not enter the kingdom of God, to God's great dismay, and were rejected. And then, of course, the message went out to the Gentiles, but the Jews were going to get the first shot.

In Romans, several times, Paul says the gospel is to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. And what that means is that because God already had a relationship by covenant with Israel, he gave them the first opportunity to respond to the gospel. But when they rejected it, a lot of them, it became open game, you know, open season.

And the Gentiles and Samaritans and others were able to come in big time. In fact, when Paul preached, although he was an apostle to the Gentiles, he always went to the Jews first in every region where he preached. He went into the synagogue where the Jews would be meeting.

And like one of the first recorded sermons he gave in a synagogue, we read in Acts 13, and we read that the people in the synagogue rejected Paul, at least the Jewish people did. And it says in verse 46 of Acts 13, Then Paul and Barabbas grew bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first, meaning the Jews first. But since you rejected and judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turned to the Gentiles.

So this is how the progression went. When Jesus came, and later when the apostles went

and preached in places where Jesus had not come yet, they always approached the Jews first, because the Jews up until that time had been God's people. But now the Jews were given an opportunity to decide to still be God's people or not.

In order to continue being one of God's people, you had to come into God's kingdom. You had to accept God's Son, the Messiah. And many of the Jews, of course, rejected Jesus as the Messiah and did not come into the kingdom, and therefore, of course, could not be regarded to be God's people anymore.

But some Jews did. There was always a remnant of Israel that came in, and eventually Gentiles as well. But initially, Jesus tells His disciples on this occasion, Don't go to the Gentiles, don't go to the Samaritans, but just go and reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

So that's the Jewish people. And so that's apparently what they did on this occasion. Now, He tells them to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, and so forth and so on.

And at the end of verse 8, He says, Freely you have received, freely give. That means what you're doing, healing, raising the dead, casting out demons, you're doing a tremendous service for people. They may offer you money.

They may do it out of appreciation, or they may try to buy your services. And do not buy. Don't sell it.

You received this power freely. You didn't pay for it. Therefore, it is wrong for you to charge for it.

If you charge for it, you are in violation. Now, Jesus, we know, never charged for the ministry. And the apostles were commanded not to charge for the ministry either.

Now, these men, of course, were told specifically not to take gold or silver or copper in their money belts, nor a bag for their money, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs. Now, think about this for a moment. They are not taking money with them, which means if they're going to eat on this journey, they're going to have to obtain money and food from somewhere.

They're not taking it along with them. And yet, they are told not to charge. He says, Freely you have received, freely give.

Well, how is this going to work out economically for the ministers of the gospel? They don't take money with them, and they don't charge from the people they minister to. How do they live? Well, Jesus answers that question at the end of verse 10. He says, For the worker is worthy of his food.

Now, what does that mean? The laborer is worthy of his hire. What does that mean?

What it means is you are working for God. God pays his labors.

God is a just God. He doesn't hire employees and then hold back their pay. They are worthy of their labor.

If they labor for God, God will pay their hire. And what this means in actual experience is that if you go forth in obedience to God, and you are serving Him, then He will pay you. He'll support you.

Now, right in this very passage, there is an obvious difference between a paid clergy in the sense of salary, on the one hand, and a supported clergy, such as the Bible recommends. I'm using the word clergy to mean people who are in full-time preaching ministry, whether they're pastors, evangelists, whatever. Not all Christians are called to full-time preaching.

Some are called to other vocations as well. And many of those vocations generate income. Now, preaching in itself is not an income generator unless you're charging for it.

And therefore, most people who preach today receive a salary. They have a guaranteed income, and they have a contractual arrangement with the church or the organization they work for, and they get paid for what they do. Now, I'm not here to condemn those who do this, but frankly, I think that's different than what Jesus was teaching.

Jesus said, freely you have received, freely give. And because of that, I don't think that a minister of the gospel should sell his services. Now, whatever he has, he got freely.

Now, someone might say, well, I didn't get it freely. I went to Bible college, and I have a big debt to pay off, and they charged me for this training. And therefore, I have to be repaid to pay off my school debts.

Well, that is a shame. That does show that we have a very terrible system, unlike the time of Jesus, where you have to pay money in order to be trained for the ministry. Any school that charges people to teach them the Word of God should be ashamed of themselves, and I think they will be ashamed on the Day of Judgment, when Jesus specifically said, freely you have received, freely give, to sell the Word of God, to my mind, is a corrupt practice.

And what is it but selling the Word of God? If Bible college professors and Bible college organizations say, okay, you pay us X number of thousands of dollars, and we'll teach you the Word of God, so you can be a minister. Well, isn't that selling the Word of God? Where does Jesus command to freely give what you freely receive come in? Now, if someone says, well, because I had to pay so much for my training, I can't freely give to the ministry. Well, yes, you can.

You can trust God, and God will support you through people. I can testify to this. I've

done it for 30 years.

When I entered the ministry when I was 16 years old, or 17 when I left home, I decided I would never charge, I would never take a salary, I would never even inform anyone of my needs, and I never have yet. Well, I might have on one or two occasions slipped from my convictions, but only maybe twice or so in 30 years, and that was only, it was times I probably shouldn't have, it was just weak moments. But my determination was that I would not even tell people when I had needs, much less would I charge.

And God has taken care of me. I have a family. I have five children.

We have lacked nothing. I lack nothing. If anything, we are fairly abundantly supplied with all things necessary.

We don't have all the luxuries and toys and things some people have, but we don't want them either. But we want to serve God, and my life for the past 30 years has simply been freely serving God. I receive absolutely no money whatsoever, no perks, no benefits from doing this radio program or my other radio program.

I'm a volunteer completely without any remuneration, and I'm glad of it. I'm not boasting. It's the way I believe the Bible teaches we're supposed to be.

We preach the gospel, and we do it for free. But someone, a pastor who was hearing me say these things once, asked me, well, don't you believe in a supported ministry? Of course I do. Of course I believe in a supported ministry.

I'm a supported ministry. I live from contributions that people send in. But they're entirely unpredictable.

They come from God directly through people rather than through an organization that pre-measures them and that I have a contract, I'll minister, you pay. You see, what the apostles did, I understand fairly clearly on this because it's the way I've lived for 30 years, and some of the people listening may not understand this. There's a huge difference between contracting with an organization or a group of people and saying, I will minister to you if you pay X number of dollars, which are the needs of my family, etc.

That is one thing. That is certainly charging for the ministry. I mean, how could it be anything other? That is charging.

Now, on the other hand, if I say, I will minister without any reference to money at all, and I will trust God to provide for me however he chooses. Well, in many cases, the money that comes in comes from those indeed who are being ministered to, but they're not being charged. They give freely if they wish to.

They don't if they don't. And then, actually, some of the money comes from places that

are not from people who are being ministered. It's amazing how many different places God provides for me from.

But the point is, if you're not charging an organization or a group of people, you're simply working for God, and God pays, God supports, but he does so through people. Now, someone might say, well, this was an exceptional situation because these were the apostles going out on a missionary trip, and it wouldn't apply to modern pastors today. Well, actually, I think it does, because when Paul talked about the elders and their support, in 1 Timothy 5, it's rather interesting.

He quotes Jesus in this place. In 1 Timothy 5, he speaks about elders. And, by the way, in the New Testament, elders they had instead of pastors.

Some churches today have elders as well as a pastor, but in the Bible times, no church. As far as we can tell from the Scripture, had a pastor. The pastors of the church were multiple elders in each church, and they did the pastoral ministry.

But with reference to these pastor elders, Paul says in 1 Timothy 5, 17, Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. Now, this double honor has to do with honoring their needs, providing their finances. How do I know that? Because of what Paul says next.

He says, For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain, and the laborer is worthy of his wages. Now, here he quotes two verses to prove his point. What is he talking about? He's talking about paying the minister.

It's talking about supporting those who are elders who rule well, and especially those who labor in the word and in doctrine. Those people are doing a service for the church, and the church should be prepared to help them out. But that doesn't mean the pastor can charge.

It means there's an obligation upon those he ministers to, to willingly and voluntarily contribute to his support. It doesn't have to be the same amount every week or month. It can be once a year or whatever.

I mean, it's just that the minister is supposed to be made free financially to minister full time, but he doesn't have to charge for it. It should be voluntary on the part of those he ministers to, rather than him charging for it. Now, what's interesting is Paul quotes two Old Testament passages about this.

One, I'm sorry, one Old Testament, one New Testament. He quotes from the scripture that says, You shall not muzzle an ox that treads out the grain. That's Deuteronomy 25, verse 4. But then he also quotes Jesus, where he says, And the laborer is worthy of his wages.



This is 1 Timothy 5.18. He quotes Jesus. The laborer is worthy of his wages. And he is saying it about elders or pastors of the church.

Now, what's the context of Jesus saying that? Jesus said that when he sent out the apostles and told them, Freely you have received, freely give. And he said, The laborer is worthy of his wages. What he means by that is, Instead of charging people for the gospel, just work for God and God will provide your wages.

Do you know that for a few hundred years after the time of Christ, the clergy in the early church were never salaried? And in the Didache, a very early Christian document, it said if a minister asks for money, he's a false prophet. So, we might reconsider some of our assumptions about church and money and so forth. Jesus taught his disciples to trust God and work for God.

I think that when an organization pays a man's wages, they tend to be his boss. And then he has to preach what pleases them or suffer the consequences. And that's a really uncomfortable and unenviable position many pastors have found themselves in.

They can't preach what their conscience tells them to preach because the organization that pays them won't let them. But if you're just working for God, and you don't care, no one's paying your bills except God himself through whatever means he may choose to do, then you are free. I have ministered this way for 30 years, and I praise God that I never have been salaried.

I've had never a guaranteed income at all. I've never lacked anything God has miraculously provided for 30 years, every need we have. And it is a freeing thing.

And as you can tell from listening to this radio program, I can say pretty much what I believe to be true, even if it's very different from what a lot of traditional Christians say. Because I don't have to please men. I only have to please God.

He's the one who pays my salary. And that is a variable salary over the past 30 years. But the point is, God is the one who pays.

I cannot predict what he will produce, but he has always produced enough, and he is the only one I have to please. What a purifying thing that is to work for God and not for an organization. And that is what Jesus said to the disciples, you don't charge the people you're ministering to.

They should pay you, but you don't charge them. It's up to them to freely give to you just as you freely give to them. But you just go out and serve God, and God will recognize his laborers, and he will pay them their wages.

We'll have to take this up again next time in greater detail, but we've run out of time for this particular section, and we'll take it up again when we return in our next session

together.