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Missionary Discourse (Part 3)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg discusses how Jesus prepared and sent out his twelve disciples as emissaries to the cities of Israel. He emphasizes that modern-day Christians should not compromise their beliefs and should instead strive to emulate Jesus' lifestyle. Gregg notes that while rejection and possibly even persecution may be experienced in the short-term, it is better to die obedient than live a compromised life. He also emphasizes that a true disciple of Jesus must prioritize their love for him above all else.

Transcript

I'd like to take the rest of Matthew 10 at this point from where we left off last time and then move forward into a few other things. Hopefully we'll have time to do all of that. In our previous session, we took the first 23 verses of Matthew 10.

And you probably don't need much in the way of recap, but just to summarize, Chapter 10 is a composite, it would appear to be quite a composite, discourse. It's probable, almost certain from the evidence within the passage, that Jesus did not say all of these things on the same occasion. That is, all at one time.

I have no doubt that Jesus said all of these things. Of course, people like the Jesus Seminar probably don't believe he ever said any of these things. But I don't want anyone to mistakenly think that I'm saying something like that.

When I say that Matthew has grouped things topically, I'm not saying that he fabricated anything. He just remembered many things that he'd heard Jesus say. And when he decided to write them down, he grouped them, not in their chronological arrangement, but in a topical arrangement, which is just as reasonable a way to group things as any other.

And that's what he seems to have done here. And we saw that from, first of all, internal evidence and also external evidence. The internal evidence is, for example, that in verse 5 he tells the disciples not to go to the way of the Gentiles.

But in verse 18 he tells them they're going to be brought before kings and rulers and

bear witness before the Gentiles. Which means that verse 5 is talking about one mission that they'd be on, and verse 18 is talking about a different mission, not at this occasion. As it turns out, verses 16 through 22, which includes this statement in verse 18, verses 16 through 22 have their parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21, which both, of course, are giving us what we call the Olivet Discourse, something Jesus said on a very different occasion than this.

Now, the occasion at the beginning of Matthew chapter 10 is the sending out of the Twelve on their first outreach mission. It was short-term. We don't know how long it lasted, but the instructions he gave them on that occasion really are found in verses 5 through 15.

And we have parallels to that, both in Mark and in Luke. And, of course, Mark 6 verses 7 through 13 and Luke 9 verses 1 through 6 are the parallels, and they both tell of Jesus sending out the Twelve and giving these very same instructions that are found here in Matthew 10 verses 5 through 15. So it would appear that verses 5 through 15 are actually the instructions Jesus gave on this occasion.

Then verses 16 through 22 give instructions Jesus gave on another occasion, a different occasion, about the wider future work of the Apostles, and that occasion appears to have been the Olivet Discourse. Verse 23, the last verse we covered in our last session, it doesn't really have parallels elsewhere. Therefore, it's not certain what it belongs to.

It probably, you know, I guess I would suggest that it probably actually belongs to the occasion of his sending out the Twelve initially, that Matthew had simply sandwiched in these verses from the Olivet Discourse, verses 16 through 22, that he had sandwiched those in between statements that were actually in the sending out. The other alternative is that verse 23 actually belongs to the Olivet Discourse also. It would fit either context.

It would fit either context. But it seems to fit the earlier context better, because it is talking about the cities of Israel. And in the sending out of the Twelve, which is ostensibly the context of Matthew 10, he tells them in verse 6 to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This short-term mission was going to be confined geographically within Israel, whereas the Olivet Discourse speaks about their worldwide ministry. And verse 23 focuses on going to all the villages of Israel before the Son of Man comes. So it would appear if we were to make a choice, which context does verse 23 belong to, it would seem the earlier outreach is the more likely context in my judgment.

Okay, now we come to material we didn't cover last time. Verses 24 and 25, a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher and a servant like his master.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household? Now, when Jesus says a disciple is not above his teacher, it's enough for him to be just like his teacher. That could be understood if it were not modified, as it is. But if it were not modified, it could be understood a lot of different ways.

It could mean that a student never exceeds his teacher in ability or in intelligence or knowledge, and that would certainly not be true at all. There are many students who have exceeded their teachers. In fact, in Psalm 119, the psalmist says, I know more than all my teachers, because your testimonies are my meditation.

And so it is possible for a student to exceed his teacher in knowledge. But what I think Jesus is saying is, in fact, his modification of it at the end of verse 25 suggests this. He's saying a disciple should not expect more privileges than his teacher.

A disciple should not consider himself worthy of greater honors and privilege than his teacher has. The very fact of his being a disciple means that he is under the teacher. Now, the teacher in this case, obviously, is Jesus himself.

And therefore, all of us, not only the twelve, but all of us, should understand how this axiom affects us. We are all disciples. He is our teacher.

And, of course, none of us think we're going to be greater than Jesus, but that's not really the point. It's not a question of whether we're going to be greater than Jesus or not, but whether we should enjoy greater privileges than Jesus did or not. The way he clarifies that that's what he means is in the end of verse 25.

He says, if they have called the master of the house, that's Jesus, if they've called him Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household, that is, his disciples? In other words, if Jesus was despised, his disciples should not expect otherwise. They shouldn't expect to be loved. They shouldn't expect that they will be honored if their master was despised.

They shouldn't expect that if he had no place to lay his head, that they will live with all the comforts of the world and all the honors of the world. That they should, in other words, emulate his lifestyle to a certain extent, obviously depending on their circumstance. Jesus' circumstances are not to be emulated in every sense, because not all disciples are in his circumstance.

He was a full-time preacher. Not all disciples are. He was not only a full-time preacher.

He didn't just pastor a church. He traveled around. He was an itinerant preacher.

Not everyone who is even a preacher is called to do that. Furthermore, he was a single man, without family obligations. Not all Christians are in that position either.

So obviously there are some circumstances of Jesus' life that are not to be emulated. But there are certainly some principles, some values and policies which Jesus adopted, which have their analogy in any state of life. That is, those principles may be fleshed out or lived out somewhat differently in different callings and different states of life, but they remain, nonetheless, unchanging principles.

And the one he makes reference to is that the Master was hated by the world. Now, he wasn't hated by the world because he did anything wrong. He was hated by the world because he would not buy into the world's values.

He wouldn't buy into the world's ideas. He wouldn't even buy into the religious world's ideas. He was radically obedient to his Father and radically committed to speaking the truth.

And those are really the only two policies that got him into trouble. The reason they called him Beelzebub is because he would not compromise. He always had to do what his Father told him to do, even if that put him up against the religious establishment or even the Roman establishment, or the public approval.

He allowed himself to be hated in the world because he would not compromise on truth or on obedience to his Father. And the Christian, the disciple, should not think himself worthy of more honor than that among people who, the same kind of people who killed Jesus, should be wanting to kill us. Now, that doesn't mean we should want to go out and get people wanting to kill us necessarily, but not everybody wanted to kill Jesus.

But the kind of people who did should be the same people who would want to kill us for the same reasons, because they couldn't tolerate Jesus uncompromising obedience to his Father. The only way they would tolerate us would be if we were compromising. And we shouldn't be.

So we should not expect better treatment than Jesus. Now, the disciples, of course the twelve, at this point and even at a later point, were still hoping that they might have something like political positions in Jesus' cabinet when he established the kingdom. They were still confused about what the kingdom would look like when it actually would come into manifestation.

And it was after this time that James and John still asked if they could sit at his right hand and his left hand in the kingdom. And so they were still thinking in terms of politics and honor and so forth, and he's correcting that here. First of all, back in an earlier verse, in verse 22, he said, You will be hated by all for my name's sake.

And now he says, and that shouldn't be strange, they hate me too. They call me Beelzebub. I've commented before about the word Beelzebub.

It means Lord of the Flies, but it's actually a scornful name that the Jews gave to a

Philistine deity, Beelzebul. Beel is a very common and familiar name in the Old Testament. It's actually just the Middle Eastern Semitic word for a lord or a prince or something like that, lord really, master.

But sometimes it takes the form of a proper name so that in the scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, the prophets frequently rebuke, even Elijah said, If Beel is God, then serve him. Well, Beelzebul actually means Prince Bael or Exalted Bael, something like that. The Jews often, especially when they were zealous for Jehovah, did not even want the names of the pagan gods to be heard on their lips.

And yet there were times that they wished to speak about such things, and so they would sometimes give a scornful corruption of the name. And Beelzebul, which means Exalted Bael or Prince Bael, they changed to Beelzebub, which is very similar, but means Lord of the Flies, which obviously is a mockery of Bael. He's the lord of what, you know? I remember when Benjamin, my son, was younger, he used to style himself to be a ruler in the family.

And we used to tell him that he was the king of the nothings. He was king, but he was king of nothing. There was nothing that he had rulership over.

And the Jews were sort of conveying that idea, too. Yeah, Bael's a lord. He's a lord of the flies.

Let the flies be his subjects. They're filthy, unclean, despicable, but also inconsequential animals. And to say this is his kingdom, the kingdom of the mosquitoes and the flies and the gnats, is simply their way of dishonoring Bael.

Anyway, by Jesus' time, that was the way the Jews would speak about this pagan deity. Now, also, we need to realize that Beelzebub was a word that had, its meaning had evolved among the Jews. We realize that the Jewish idea, and the correct idea, by the way, because it's stated in the Old Testament Scripture and also in Paul, was that the idols and the gods of the heathen were not just so many carved images.

There were demons behind them. There were spiritual entities associated with them. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 10.20. He says, don't you know that the things that the heathen offer, they sacrifice to demons and not to God? Now, technically, the sacrifices were offered before an idol, but Paul said they were sacrificed to demons.

In the Psalms, there's a number of places, and in Deuteronomy also, that refers to the pagans sacrificing to demons, which is simply to say that the idols and the false gods of the pagans were not simply stones. I mean, they were simply stones, but the worship involved the invoking of the demonic. And so, as Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, excuse me, the Philistine god ceased to be worshipped because, first of all, the Philistines became extinct, and eventually there was no more worship of that god among the Jews, there

were no more idols of Beelzebul.

The name simply became associated with the demonic power behind it, and eventually became a name that was tantamount to the name of the prince of all demons. In fact, apparently, equal to Satan. Exactly what stages this name went through in its etymology to be associated with Satan, we don't know, at least I don't.

There may be, in the intertestamental literature, some way to trace the development of that word and its use, but we know this much, by the time of Jesus, Beelzebub no longer was simply a name that referred to the Philistine or the Canaanite deity, but it now was associated with Satan himself. And this is clear, for example, in Matthew chapter 12, where Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. In Matthew 12, 24, when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

And Jesus clarified that in verse 26. He said, if Satan casts out Satan, which is what he's saying, their statement is implying that Satan is casting out Satan. Well, maybe he's just saying that Beelzebub is a demon and the demons he's casting out are demons and both are associated with the Satanic empire, so it's like Satan casting out Satan.

But it seems as though he's equating Beelzebub with Satan himself, and no doubt doing so because that's what the Pharisees themselves meant when they said Beelzebub is the prince of the demons. The actual prince of demons would be Satan himself. So somehow, in the thinking of the Jews, this name, which originally was a scornful nickname for a pagan deity, came to be used for a name for Satan himself, or at least for prince of demons.

Now, Jesus said, if they've called me Beelzebub, then what are they going to call you? You're less than me. You're my followers. You're not my leaders.

You will be accorded less honor than I have been, and if they give me that little honor, you can expect the same for yourself. Now, in John 15, 20, Jesus is in the upper room with the disciples, his final discourse to them, just the night of his betrayal. But note, in John 15, 20, he said, remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my word, they will also keep yours. Now, he says, remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

Obviously, he's referring back to the time when he told them that previously, which is here in Matthew 10. Of course, we don't know the exact context of the statement of Matthew 10, since we don't know if he said this when he sent out the twelve, or if he said this in connection with the Olivet Discourse, because it's not recorded in either of those

other places in parallel, or whether he gave this on a separate occasion still. But we know this.

He gave it before the upper room discourse, because there in John 15, 20, in the upper room, he reminds them of having previously made this statement. If they persecute me, they'll persecute you, because a servant is not greater than his master. Now, one other thing I'd point out is there's a similar statement to this found in Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, in Luke chapter 6. But it's not quite the same in form or even in meaning.

In Luke chapter 6, in verse 40, this is, as I said, Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. You can see that by seeing verse 37, for example, judge not and you shall not be judged, is obviously from Matthew 7, part of the Sermon on the Mount, and so is the rest of this context here. But in verse 40, he says, a disciple is not above his teacher.

Same thing that he says over here in Matthew 10, but he makes a different application. He says, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. Not above him, but like him.

Now, here the idea is somewhat different. It's possible that a disciple is not above his teacher might have been an axiom. It might have been a saying even before Jesus.

It may have been something that the rabbis said. It's hard to say. But it's clear that Jesus applies that axiom more than one way.

In Matthew 10, it is, since everyone knows a disciple is not above his teacher, you disciples should not expect better treatment than your teacher got, or more privileges than your teacher got, or more comforts, or more acceptance from the world than your teacher got. But in Luke 6, where we have the same statement, a disciple is not above his teacher, he makes a different application. He says, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

And here he's clearly not talking about in terms of persecution, because you can get persecution as much as Jesus got without being fully trained. He's talking about the results of discipleship, once you've been taught thoroughly, once the teacher is finished with the course he's putting you through, you will have attained likeness to him. Now, likeness, yes, not equality.

When Jesus says no disciple is greater than his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher, it doesn't mean that he will be greater than or even equal to, but like him. It is a fact that that's why a person disciples under a rabbi, is they want to pick up what that guy's got. They want to learn to think like he thinks, to know what he knows, to act like he acts.

They're in training. They're apprentices. And so, it's axiomatic.

Although the disciple is not greater than his teacher, he can resemble his teacher when the training is complete. And of course, in the context of Jesus and his disciples, this becomes a tremendous promise, because he's saying to his disciples that once I'm finished with you, once I've finished training you, you'll be like me. That doesn't mean you'll be God, like I'm God, but it means that you'll have likeness to me, which is of course what the goal of the Christian life is, is to be like Jesus.

That means our character and so forth will be like his. Anyway, that's a little different than what's being brought out in Matthew 10. I only bring it up because it's so similar, in some respects, to what Matthew 10, 24 says, a disciple is not above his teacher.

Now, Matthew 10, 26 through 33, and in fact, also 34 through 36, that entire section, 26 through 36 of Matthew 10, has parallels in Luke 12, but not even in an all-in-one context, Luke 12. Luke 12 is a long chapter, and some of it's found early in the chapter, and some is found late in the chapter, in different contexts. But as far as the exact context it comes from, it's hard to say, because Jesus might have said this in the context that Matthew gives, or he might have said it in the context that Luke gives.

It doesn't much matter, because it's what he said that's important, rather than on what occasion he said it. But he says, therefore do not fear them. That therefore, in verse 26, seems strange, because therefore means, because of what I've just said.

Well, what's he just said? They're going to treat you worse than they treated me. Therefore, don't be afraid of them. That's a strange conclusion to reach.

It seems like what he just said would be reason to be afraid of them, not reason not to be. But he says, basically, the reason he says therefore is because you're not above your master, and your master's not afraid of them. They call him Beelzebub, and he just takes that as coming with the territory.

That's just part of, it's just part of the package of being a prophet of God, of being God's man in the devil's world. Your master, you're not, you shouldn't expect to be above him. And since your master proceeds on course without fear, in spite of the fact that they call him Beelzebub, you also should not fear, and you should proceed unwavering, when they call you that or worse.

Okay? So, therefore, don't be afraid of them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. And what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetop.

And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. But rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your father's will.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear, therefore. You are of more

value than many sparrows.

Therefore, whoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. Now, this, of course, would be a fitting thing for Jesus to say when he was sending out the twelve on the first mission, and even more so when sending them out on their longer mission.

It is possible that they experienced a certain amount of rejection, maybe even some persecution outright, on this short-term outreach that he sent them out on. And we have no record whether they did or not. He did, when he sent them out, say, if they don't receive you in such and such a city, then go to the next city.

Just stamp the dust off your feet. And that might suggest that they were going to meet some opposition, some of which might have been a bit violent or hostile. And so, the things he's just said about don't be afraid of men, you confess me boldly before men, and don't deny me before men, those words of encouragement might be necessary on the occasion of their going out on this short-term outreach.

And therefore, they might belong to this context. But as I say, in Luke, they're found in a different context. And they could belong to any context, to tell you the truth.

I mean, these instructions are fitting for the Christian life in general, whether he gave this when he was sending them out on the Great Commission, out into all nations, or on a short-term outreach, or even when he wasn't particularly sending them out anywhere. The fact is, you don't have to be sent out anywhere to encounter opposition. You can encounter it right at home.

In fact, in verses 34 through 36, he says, Do not think I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes will be those of his own household.

So you don't even have to leave home to encounter opposition. Now, this whole section, then, is Jesus' way of saying, you're going to get opposition, but don't let that dissuade you. I'm telling you things privately, but I'm doing so not because I don't want the world to know, but I want you to broadcast them.

Now, some might think that's an awful, mean thing for Jesus to do. I mean, if the disciples are going to catch a lot of flack for broadcasting it, but Jesus just tells it to them in private, you know, he's safe. But Jesus was getting enough opposition as it was.

It's not as if Jesus was taking the easy way. There were the things he was saying to them privately, he said to them privately, not because he was afraid of opposition, he was getting that from his public behavior, too, but because in his private talks with them, he

was discipling them and transferring to them his message, because he knew he was going to die. And after they had heard it privately in training under him, when, you know, in their private times where he was teaching them, they were going to have to herald the message and say the same things that he was saying, the same things that were getting him into trouble right now.

They were going to have to get in trouble for later, because they'd have to carry the torch after he was taken out of the world. And so he tells them in verse 28, do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. And obviously that refers to people.

People can kill your body, but they can do no more after that, and that is, Jesus says, reason to not be concerned. Now, what this tells us, of course, is something that really needs to alter our whole way of thinking about life, and that is, death is nothing to be feared. Now, I was listening to a radio preacher yesterday, and not a bad one, he's a good evangelical guy, and he was talking about, what was he talking about? How when we die, we're going to go see the Lord, or something like that.

And he said something like, you know, I'm looking forward to seeing Jesus and stuff, he says, but I'm not ready to go right now. I still have quite a few things to work out, I want to work on, or something like that. But, you know, to me that was a strange thing for a Christian to say, I'm not ready to go now.

Paul said, for me to live as Christ and to die as gain, if you really believe dying is better than living, and that's what to die as gain suggests, it's better to die than to live as a Christian, because, of course, your condition after death is much more to be desired than the condition before death. No matter how comfortable your life is right now, it will never be free from sorrows and pains, of some degree, weakness and limitations, opposition and so forth, but after you die, all those things are gone, and you're simply in the presence of God, and His holy angels, and Jesus, and all the saints, and you're in the company of people who aren't going to be picking on you anymore, there's no pain or grief or sorrow. Why would anyone think that they're not ready to go, if they're a Christian? I'm ready to go anytime.

I mean, I must confess, I sometimes wonder what would become of my children, how they'd be raised, what influences would be on their lives and so forth if I died right now, but I'm not worried about that. I mean, God is a father to the fatherless, and they'd probably be better off with Him than with me as a father. So I can't allow the fact that I have children or responsibilities to say, well, I'm not quite ready to go yet.

Because actually, Jesus says in verse 37, He that loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. If you'd rather be with your son or your daughter, your wife, or your husband, than with Jesus, there's something wrong here. You're not worthy of Him.

And this is something that, in a sense, it seems obvious among Christians. I mean, to a non-Christian, this wouldn't seem obvious, but among Christians, I would hope that this would be obvious. Of course, obviously, it's more delightful and desirable in the presence of Jesus than in the presence of anybody else.

Even if that anybody else is still a wonderful person and one of the most wonderful people in the world to be with, your husband, your wife, your children, your mother, your father, whoever they may be, maybe it's an unmixed joy to be with these people. However, to be with them means you have to be in this world. And this world is not an unmixed joy, an unmixed blessing.

It's even with the compensations you have from being with lovely people. It does not remove the fact that there are temptations of sin, there are failures, there's weakness, there's sickness, there's pains, there's loss, none of which occurs after you've gone to be with the Lord. Furthermore, no matter how delightful the person is that you'd be loath to leave behind in death, I certainly hope you don't find them more delightful than Jesus Himself.

To love father, mother, wife, children more than me, He said, is to make yourself unworthy of me. Jesus calls people to a radical revision of their value system. In the natural, there's probably no relationships that command natural affection more than that between parents and children.

It's not always the case that grown children are quite attached to their parents, but parents are almost always quite attached to their children. And sometimes it's the reverse as well. Or husbands and wives.

Jesus names those relationships that are most intimate and usually the most, if they're good ones, the most likely to be emotionally binding. And He says, yet if you put those above me, you're not worthy of me. We're getting ahead of ourselves here because I want to talk about the verses before that, but that verse in verse 37 obviously is relevant to all of this.

Don't fear those who kill the body. Well, many people say, well, I don't, I'm not afraid to die, but I sure hate to leave so-and-so behind, you know, without the assistance that I provide for them or whatever, or the influence I have on them for good. Obviously, God is the one who's really in charge of the day of your death.

And if you die in obedience to Him, you die in His will. It's certainly better to die being obedient than to live by being compromised. A compromised life is not a life worth living.

The only way that living in this world at all can be full of the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ is if we live without compromise. If we do compromise, we might as well not even be here anyway. Our conscience condemns us, and we don't experience

the fullness of the blessing of the gospel because we're not walking in the responsibility that we have and so forth.

It's just more desirable to die and be with the Lord in obedience than to live in obedience or especially in disobedience. So you shouldn't fear death. Him that kills the body, of course, in this case refers to the persecutors in all likelihood, but there are other things that kill the body too that you shouldn't fear.

Accidents, wars, disease, AIDS. Christians just got no reason to fear those things that kill the body because we don't plan to get out of here alive anyway. There's no way out alive unless you happen to be here when Jesus comes back and raptures you, and then you may be one of those rare ones in history who happens to not die.

There will be a few. But I suspect that even they don't get out alive because they have to die in another sense before they qualify for that. You have to really die to the world.

You have to be crucified to this world and crucified to your own flesh, the Bible says in a number of places. You have to take up your cross daily even to qualify. Now, what I'm suggesting to you, of course, is that you don't even qualify to make it in the rapture if you're not willing to die and to lose this world and everything for Christ.

You may not have to if you happen to be in that last generation of Christians that sees the Lord come. There's no guarantees that we are in such a generation. We may be or we may not be.

But whether we are or not, nobody is going to be in the kingdom of God who has not died. Died to this world, died to their own plans and desires, and that is something that's quite clear here. As in verse 37, where it says, anyone who loves father, mother more than he is not worthy of me, look at the parallel to this in Luke 14.

But don't lose Matthew 10, of course. When you find Luke 14, look back at Matthew 10 just for a moment. I really should have read not only verse 37, but through 39 to make this parallel in Luke 14.

Matthew 10, 37 through 39 says, He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it. Now, look at Luke 14, and begin around verse 25. And great multitudes went with him, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother and his wife and his children, brothers and sisters, yes, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

He can't be a Christian. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me he

cannot be my disciple. Now, those two statements are parallel to Luke, excuse me, to Matthew 10, verses 37 through 39.

One of the differences being that where Matthew 10 says that such people who will not do this, they are not worthy of him, in Luke, the same people are said can't be his disciples. So, who are these people? Well, those who love Jesus more than they love all other relations. Even more than they love their own life.

And who take up their cross and follow him. Now, to take up your cross and follow Jesus is to basically die to this world. Paul says in Galatians chapter 6, I hope I can quickly find the verse number, I think I can, because Galatians 6 is not a very long chapter, but Paul says that God forbid, here, verse 14, but God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me and I have been crucified to the world.

So, this is what it means to take up your cross. You accept the fate of being crucified unto the world and having the world crucified unto you. It is not your home.

The things of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, these things are not your pursuits. Your heart is not on these things. You have died to these things.

Now, you might say, well, if you say that only such people as that can look forward to the rapture, then what about all these many Christians who don't take up their cross, who are, in fact, their hearts very much are into the things of this world. Did you say Christians? You're using the word differently than the Bible is. And these people, if they wish, can take their chances on God honoring their definition of Christian above the biblical definition, but I wouldn't want to take my chances on that.

I don't think God, on the day of judgment, is going to say, well, even though I said it this way, I'll go with your definition. It seems to me like Jesus, on several occasions, indicated that that's what some people are going to be surprised to learn, that they had a definition that was different than his. Therefore, although it may not bode well for a lot of people who we would wish to consider Christians, I mean, we love them, we like them, we want them to be Christians, we want to think well of them, yet we're not really at liberty to change the definition of Christian.

Jesus gave the definition, and he didn't give us authority. He gave us authority over demons, but he didn't give us authority over him. He didn't give us authority over his teaching to change it or to redefine it.

Unfortunately, the Church has taken that authority upon itself, and there are, therefore, multitudes of persons who believe that the coming of the Lord will be a wonderful thing for them, and they are, no doubt, among the ones that Jesus said many will say, Lord,

Lord, didn't we do all these things in your name? We're so glad you came. You'll say, I don't, I never knew you. You didn't do the will of my Father.

Didn't you read what I said? You know, didn't you hear my words? And what he's saying, that's why I say no one's going to get out of here alive, even those who are raptured. The ones who are raptured are just the ones who would have been saved if they hadn't, if they had died. I mean, they just happen to be alive.

They just don't meet their appointment with death before the coming of the Lord, so they get raptured instead, but they still have to meet the same qualifications as anyone to be saved, and those qualifications are given right here. You love your father, mother, wife, children, your own life, the things of this world more than Jesus? Would you rather stay with them than go to be with him right now? Then your attitude definitely needs readjustment, because according to the words of Jesus, you're not worthy of him. Anyone who takes him lightly isn't worthy of him.

There's probably nothing more insulting to God than those who take him lightly. I suppose that, my guess is that this is probably more offensive to him than the atheist who vehemently opposes God. At least the atheist who vehemently opposes God is taking God seriously, seriously enough to not ignore him, seriously enough to be threatened by him and to want to oppose him, but the person who believes there's a God but doesn't think he's very important, the person who is not denying the existence of God and therefore implicitly or explicitly acknowledges God's existence but takes him lightly, that person is, in some respects, more insulting to God, I think, than others.

And there are some who are simply not worthy of him, even though they would call themselves believers. They're not disciples. They cannot be his disciples in the condition that they're in in making the choices they're making with their heart being where their heart is.

It's so easy to think in a land like our own that we can have it all. In fact, that's the great, you know, that's what the women's movement is trying to advertise to women now. You can have it all.

You can have the traditional enjoyment of a family and children and so forth, which the feminists found by hard experience is hard to do without. Feminists at one time thought that they didn't need children, they could just wear the pants in the family and be the men of the family just like the men were and that'd be just as fulfilling for them as it is for men. Then they found out they're made differently than men.

They got different emotional makeup, they got different biology, they got, you know, and a lot of them thought, gosh, I don't feel very fulfilled, I want to have a baby, you know. And so they get their obligatory one child or two children and then they go out and have a career and hire a nanny to take care of the child, you know, so they can have it all.

They can have the man's life and the woman's life.

Trouble is they don't end up with either. You can't have it all. Like the guy in the Civil War in the United States, he didn't want to be a Yankee or a rebel.

He didn't want to take sides so he put on a blue coat and gray pants and they shot at him from both sides. You just can't stand in the middle without losing both things. And we are deceived by the devil, very largely, especially in our society because it seems to be so true that you can have it all.

You can be a good Christian and you can have everything the world has to offer as well except for the sinful things, of course. Except for all adultery and alcoholism and drugs and blasphemies and murders and thefts, except for some of those things. As long as you don't do any of those immoral things, you can have all the enjoyment of the world that any pagan has.

And Jesus too. All this and heaven too. The fact of the matter is Jesus said you can't have it all.

You make your choice. You either die to this world and you forsake all that you have. That also is in Luke 14, verse 33.

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. You kind of have to make a choice. And he says one thing that stands in the way probably more than anything else of people making the right choice is fear of death.

He says in verse 28, which we've been working on a little bit here, do not fear those who kill the body and can not kill the soul. Now, why would anyone fear those who can kill the body but that they have an underlying fear of death? You don't fear those who can kill you unless you're afraid to die. If you're not afraid to die, you can't be afraid of those who want to kill you.

You can't be intimidated if death holds no terrors. So what he's addressing here is the fear of death. And what underlies a fear of death is a love for this life or for life in this world.

Why else would you fear to die but that you don't want to surrender this life and its pleasures? Now, Jesus has just said, listen, they called me Beelzebub. I'm looking forward to going to heaven. He says, you should be glad for me that I'm going away.

He said this in the Upper Room Discourse. He says, you should be glad. You should rejoice I'm going to my father.

You know? It's a lot better up there than here. And you should be glad when God summons you to go. Now, not glad because it's your obligation as a Christian to be glad

or because you've been taught by rote to say, yes, heaven is a nice place, but you should be glad because it's the natural response because it reflects your values.

You value Jesus more than you value anything this world has. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and you'll see that Paul not only expresses that this is his own sentiments, but also suggests that it's all Christian sentiments. A lot of times people think Paul maybe because of his special calling to suffer, you know, what he says about himself isn't universally applied, but here he applies it somewhat more broadly.

He says we, meaning us Christians, not just himself. He said in 2 Corinthians 5, So we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, that's our body if we die, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this one, that is in this body, in this life, we groan.

Have you been groaning lately or are you finding this world a playground? In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation, which is from heaven, as we earnestly desire to get out of this body and to go and have an eternal home in heaven. Do you earnestly desire that? If indeed we have been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Now, he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.

We are confident, yes, well pleased, rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Now, you might say, well, if I was suffering like Paul did, you know, beaten five times with rods and three times with cat and nine tails or the other way around, you know, suffering everywhere he went, maybe I'd feel that way too. But, praise God, we're not all called to suffer as much as Paul.

And that may be true. We're not all called to suffer as much as Paul. But Paul's not describing himself merely.

He says, we, we who have the Holy Spirit, we to whom the Spirit has been given as a guarantee, we are groaning and we are well pleased to reverse the situation that we're in now. The situation we're in now is we're present in the body, and that, by definition, means we're absent from the Lord because the Lord's up there and we're down here. But he says, we're confident and well pleased to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Now that, I mean, Paul assumed every Christian would agree with him on that. Of course Christians think that way, don't they? He has a parallel statement in Romans chapter 8, which a few years from now Phil will get to, in his treatment of Romans. He's no less than

I am at it.

I take a long time too. But in Romans chapter 8, he says in verse 19 and following, For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope.

Verse 21, Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Now verse 22, For we know that the whole creation groans and labors, and we're part of that in this body, groans and labors with birth pangs together until now, and not only they, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit. Even we ourselves groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies.