

Your Manual for Harvesting Souls, Part 1

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We're in Luke 10. Believe it or not, we made it. Rob Hoeks was laughing because he was gone [for] a year, and he said, "I had this bulletin from a year ago and you were just in [Luke] 9. It took you a whole year." Oh, well. There was a lot of good stuff in chapter 9. I mean, what do you expect? I figured it out—I actually preached twenty sermons in chapter 9. That's three verses a sermon—that's plenty.

In the first twelve verses [of Luke 10], God gives us a little manual for how to harvest souls. I don't know about some of you, but I'm kind of an instruction guy. I like reading the instructions. I just like instructions. Why go through the pain of trying to figure it out [on your own]? You get that piece of furniture, and you think, "I don't need to read the instructions." You start putting it together, and [later], you realize, "This isn't working." Then you are forced to read the instructions and you have to take everything apart and put it back together the right way. That's not very fun. [For] some of you [who] are not very mechanical, it can be really frustrating. You get a new cell phone, [and] it does lots of things, you just don't know how. You try and figure it out and figure it out, and finally, you get out the book, and you do it by the book, and then you say, "Oh, that's how it's done."

We have options [when we're doing things like putting furniture together]. We can either use the instruction book and get it right, or we can try and guess if we want. But when you're a Christian, you *have* to use

God's Instruction Book. There's no option. You don't get to wing it. You don't get to invent your own doctrines, invent your own way of getting to heaven, [or] invent your own way of doing what God tells you to do in His Word. You have to read God's Instruction Book and then you have to do it like God says because we're not talking about furniture, and cell phones, and things like that; we're talking about the eternal souls of men and women and the difference between heaven and hell. We have to go to God's Word and find out what God says.

Whenever you're doing any ministry, whenever you're going to do anything that relates to ministry, your first thought should always be: What does the Bible say? It has to be that way. Not, "Oh, I heard some other church was doing it this way. Oh, I read a book. Oh, let's try this." God tells us everything we need for "life and godliness" [see 2 Peter 1:3] in His Word. Yes, there's freedom to move around within the parameters of God's instructions, but we can never go outside of that. When God says [that] preaching is how He wants things to happen, we have to preach. I don't care how popular video, and television, and pod casting [are], you have to preach because God says so. The world will say, "Oh, preaching is out of style," well, then we're all out of style.

In the first twenty-four verses [of Luke 10], Luke describes for us the sending out of the seventy disciples. In verses 1–12, we have the appointment and charge of the seventy. Then in verses 13–16, Jesus threatens judgment on those who do not repent from the preaching and proclamation of the seventy. In verses 17–20 we have the report of the seventy after they return from healing the sick and proclaiming the kingdom. Then in verses 21–[24], we have the sovereignty of God in salvation and the privileges of the gospel ministry explained.

Please follow along as we look at the appointment and charge of the seventy in Luke 10:1–12:

Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He

Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house." If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near." I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

This is the text, and if it sounds a little familiar, it's because it is familiar. It's [very] similar to Luke 9:1–11 [and its parallel texts in Matthew and Mark], where we have the sending out of the Twelve. There are a whole bunch of parallels. When you compare what Jesus told the Twelve and what He told the seventy, [you see that] both groups were appointed by Him, or called by Him [see Luke 9:1; 10:1]. Both groups were given power to do miracles [see Luke 9:1, 6; 10:9]. Both groups were sent out [see Luke 9:2; 10:1]. Both groups were sent out in pairs [see Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1]. Both groups proclaimed the kingdom [Luke 9:2; 10:9, 11]. Both groups were told not to take provisions [see Luke 9:3; 10:4]. Both groups were told the worker is worthy of his wages [see Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7]. Both groups were told that they were being sent out like "sheep in the midst of wolves" (you'd think that would put an end to the movement right there)

[see Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3]. Both groups were told to leave a blessing of peace on those who received them [see Matthew 10:12–13; Luke 10:5]. Both groups were instructed to take back their greeting if not received [Matthew 10:13; Luke 10:6]. Both groups were to stay at one place in each city and not move around [see Luke 9:4; 10:5, 7]. Both groups were instructed to shake the dust off their feet in protest against those who would not receive them [see Luke 9:5; 10:10–11]. Both groups were told that it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than that city that rejected them [see Matthew 10:15; Luke 10:12].

That’s a lot of similarities. Right here it tells us something really great, and that is: what Jesus told the Twelve [about] how they were to do evangelism was the same [way] He told the seventy how to do evangelism, which tells us [that] this is not just for the Twelve, and it’s not just for the seventy, it’s for everyone. This text contains God’s manual for harvesting souls, and we’re going to see what God says.

When I sat down and [was] going through the text, I start[ed] writing down principles. I [was] looking at the passage, and I actually came up with twelve different steps. (This is not to be confused with your typical twelve-step program.) These come directly from the text, as we shall see. I looked and I noticed that five or six of them—almost half of them—had “p’s.” I just happened to write down “p’s,” and I thought, “I wonder if I could make them all ‘p’s.’” You know, I don’t usually spend my time alliterating [because] I’ve got [too many] other things to do. But I thought, “You know, some people like [alliteration], and I could humor them this once.” So, we are going to encounter twelve perfect points proposed in this pericope that we can put into practice for proselytizing pagans. That’s our proposition.

[The first] point is: Pursue God’s purpose in choosing you. Look at [Luke 10:]1. The text says: “Now after this,” just stop there. After what? Jesus is no longer ministering in and around Galilee. Remember, He’s leaving [and] heading south toward Jerusalem. He’s going to wander around in between Jerusalem and Galilee, in that area of Samaria, and north [and south] of Samaria. We see this in Luke 9:51, if you look there, where it

says: “When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem.” If you look down to Luke 9:56, [it says], “they went on to another village,” [and] if you look in verse 57, [it says]: “As they were going along the road,” so we see [that] Jesus is traveling. After verse 57, Luke says: “And these were three common excuses that Jesus received when He was going about calling people to follow Him.” So we have these three excuses [that] are representative of the whole batch of excuses that men will give for not following Jesus. Then we get to [Luke] 10:1, where Jesus is showing, in contrast to those who didn’t follow Him, seventy who were willing to follow Him without excuses.

So look at [Luke 10:]1 again: “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others.” The first step we see in verse 1 is that the Lord appoints His servants. The word “appoints” might be translated “assigned,” or “called into office.” God chooses you, He saves you, and He does it for a purpose. We aren’t saved merely for fire insurance. Being a Christian is not about, “I don’t want to go to hell so I’ll pay my premiums to God by going to church periodically, and then when I die I get to escape hell.” That’s not what Christianity is about. There are some people who don’t want God controlling every area of their lives. They want God to save them from hell, but that’s all. They want to do their own thing, live their own lives, but die and escape hell. Well, that doesn’t happen.

[Imagine] a college student is getting ready to sign up for next semester, and [a friend] says, “Oh, man, don’t take a class from Professor Hughes. He gives a lot of homework!” And so, he doesn’t. He takes a class from somebody else because he doesn’t want all the homework. Well, that’s fine if you’re in college, but it’s not fine if you’re a Christian. There is only one professor: God, and He gives life homework assignments and they’re hard, and you have to do them. There’s no escaping. You don’t get to say, “Well, I’m going to choose this and I’m going to choose that.” Listen, you’re either going to follow Christ or not. Either deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus [see Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23], or not. There’s no picking and choosing.

The Scriptures make it clear [that] when God calls someone to saving faith, He calls them into ministry. I wish I could just erase the centuries of misleading jargon that have brought us to the place where people are today. I have to tell you, I'm not "the minister." *We* are the ministers. Everybody who is a follower of Jesus is a minister. It doesn't matter what you do for a living, you are to minister. We have already seen in our series on the Church [that] all of us have spiritual gifts [and] all of us are to employ those gifts in serving one another. That's ministry. You're a minister. It's not just the guy who preaches who is the minister—that's a holdover from the Catholic Church where the priest was seen as "the minister," the representative, the conduit between the people and God. No. We are a kingdom of priests [see 1 Peter 2:9]. We all have access to God through faith in Christ. All of us have spiritual gifts. All of us. It doesn't mean we all have to be missionaries, or all need to be pastors. You can be a housewife, you can be an engineer, whatever, it doesn't matter. Whatever you do you're ministering. All day you're a representative for Jesus, an ambassador. Wherever you go, whatever you say, people are watching, and they're seeing what it means to be a Christian.

We love to quote texts like Ephesians 2:8–9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Oh, it's so wonderful. What a great verse! *Free* grace, not as a result of works. God saves us. Grace, grace, grace. But a lot of times we don't want to say the next verse: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" [Ephesians 2:10, emphasis added]. You are saved by grace to do those acts of ministry [that] God has prepared before the foundation of the world "that you would walk in them."

Paul tells Titus that Christ redeemed us from "every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). "Zealous for good deeds." You know that word "zealous"? That means you've got a fire under you. It means you have passion.

That doesn't mean you're stagnant, slothful, [or] sporadic. You're excited about God, you're excited about the ministry, man, you're just wound up. Yeah! "Zealous for good deeds," like David when he saw Goliath, [and] he said, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" [1 Samuel 17:26]. That's zeal. Or in Acts, when they told Peter and John that they had to stop preaching the gospel in Acts 4:19–20, [and they replied]: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard," and they didn't. [They said], "We're not stopping!" Zeal. Passion. God saved you to be zealous ministers.

People of Calvary Bible Church, you need to pursue God's purpose for saving you. You are not saved to escape hell only. That's just one of the benefits. You were called to be an ambassador, a follower, a minister of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you, would you call yourself a servant of Jesus? Well, are you serving? We don't want to be broken lightbulbs, and flat tires, and pens without ink. We want to be functioning for Jesus, using His gracious resources to give Him glory because we love Him. We *like* serving Him. It's wonderful to be involved in ministry. Life is short, and every day brings you closer to the grave. Soon your opportunity to proclaim the gospel will be gone. So, don't squander your talents, don't bury them in the ground [see Matthew 25:14–30], and don't say, "Oh, I'll minister tomorrow," because tomorrow may never come. God wants you to zealously pursue His purpose for saving you, which is to do the gospel ministry.

Second: Partner with others in the gospel ministry. Not only should you pursue God's purpose in choosing You, but you should also partner with others in the gospel ministry. Look at the middle of [Luke 10:]1: "And [He] sent them in pairs." Why do you suppose He did that? He "sent them in pairs." Why not send them out individually? [It] seems like you'd get a lot more coverage if you sent them out individually, right? Two coals, though, will keep each other burning when one by itself will go out. Teamwork in the gospel ministry creates a synergism. This is the first reason why God

called and sent them out in pairs: because of a spiritual synergism. If you don't know that word, a "synergism" is some event where the effect of the event is more than the sum of its individual parts. It's when one plus one equals three, or four, or five. That is a synergism.

Some of you who are married know what I'm talking about. [When] you're [first] married, you're trying to figure out how to love each other, [but] pretty soon you start working like a team. All of a sudden, one takes these tasks because he or she is good at them, and the other takes these other tasks because he or she is good at them. You start serving each other, you start enabling each other, and pretty soon both of you are able to do more ministry together than you could individually. I could never do all that I do if my wife didn't do all the things she does for me. I just couldn't do it. I'd probably have to cut down by a third. Why? [It is] because we work as a team. [It's] the same thing with her. There is a synergism there. All ministry is that way. When one is weak, another is strong. When one is doubting, the other's faith is great, [un]flinching. When one is tired, another is rested. That's why. Solomon, in his great wisdom, put it this way in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12:

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

The whole point there is [that] there is more power in teamwork. Missions agencies often require at least two people to go out in the field, [and] sometimes [whole] teams of people. Why? [It is] because they know from experience [that] if you send one person out there, he starts meeting with opposition, he gets discouraged, he gets burnt out, he comes back, and all

that training and all that effort is gone. Think about your life. Are you timid about sharing your faith? Do you know you need to get involved in ministry, but you just can't seem to get it together? Well, find somebody else who can't get it together [and help each other out]. [Or] find somebody else who [does have] his act together, and say, "I need to partner with you." That's what discipleship is all about. That's what "one anothering" is all about. You come together with somebody who is already involved, or who also wants to get involved, and together you both do more than [you could] individually.

When you look in the book of Acts, you see Peter partnered with John [see 3, 4, 8], and Paul partnered with Barnabas and Silas [see 15:22], and Barnabas partnered with Mark [see 12:25, 15:37, 15:39], and Timothy with Silas [see 17–18] and [also with] Erastus [see 19:22]. They went out in twos. They did what we're reading in [Luke 10]. Don't be a lone ranger, don't be a ministry island, a one-man show. Get somebody else involved. If you're already doing ministry and you're doing it by yourself, then get somebody else to partner with you so you can do more than you could individually. You will probably discover very quickly that two heads are not only better than one, [but] they're better than two.

The second reason I believe Jesus sent [the seventy and the Twelve] out in pairs is to present a legally binding witness. According to Deuteronomy 19:15, and Matthew 18:16, and a bunch of other texts, if you were going to condemn somebody, it had to be on the testimony of two or more witnesses. When you look down in the context [of Luke 10], and you get to verses 12 and following, Jesus is going to threaten judgment. As He's sending these men out to proclaim the gospel, He is also going to tell them that judgment is coming on those who do not receive their message. [It] is a crime against God's grace to reject the gospel.

It's the White Throne Judgment [see Revelation 20:11–15]. After Jesus comes back after the end of the Millennium, the dead in the seas, the dead in the grave, all the dead are raised, [and] they all stand before God. There is Christ, and His voice is like the sound of thunder, like the sound of many

waters [see Revelation 14:2], and He calls forth some unrepentant sinner to come before His throne of grace. He looks to an angel, and says, “Open the book and read the charges.” Then the angel reads the charges. The Lord calls forth a couple of the saints—maybe you’re one of [them]—and He says, “Did you or did you not share the gospel with this rebel, promising him eternal life by grace through faith in My death, burial, and resurrection? Did you not plead with him to repent? Did you not warn him of judgment? Did you not tempt him with the pleasures of heaven, the forgiveness of sin, and the free gift of life everlasting? Did you not tell him of God’s love for sinners as demonstrated by My death on the cross for him?”

What will those witnesses say? “Lord, You know all things, and You know what’s true.”

That is when Jesus will say, “Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the lake of fire,” and it will be on the account of two or more witnesses, and every fact will be confirmed.

God doesn’t need any witnesses—He knows all things and His witness is perfect, but He’s going to have them. It’s really scary to think that you could come to a church like this and hear the gospel over and over, Sunday after Sunday, and leave unrepentant. Every Sunday you hear the gospel, [and] you have all these witnesses against you, [who can say], “Yes, I was there. Yes, I heard it.” We need to realize that God wants us to go out in pairs, not only for the strength, but to provide a witness against those who will not repent.

Third [point]: Plan to give people the gospel more than once. Look at the end of [Luke 10:]1, where we read that Jesus “sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.” Why would He do that? Think about that. If Jesus is already going to go to a city, then why send somebody there ahead of Him to do what He’s going to do? The disciples are given power to heal, and they knew the gospel and how to proclaim it, so why, if they were going to go to a city and heal the sick, and proclaim the gospel, would Jesus need to come after [them]? It seems kind of redundant, doesn’t it? It is redundant, and purposefully so.

I worked for a carpenter framing houses [when I was] in high school. He would love to torment me. [One time] he [said], “Jack, come here. I want to show you something.”

I [asked], “What?” He pulled out a three-quarter-inch, sixteen penny framing nail, tapped it into the side of a stud, and then with one blow, he pounded it all the way in. I [thought], “Huh, I can do that. If he can do that, I can do that.” So, [during] every break, I’d be trying to pound some poor stud full of nails. I could never knock one all the way in. It was always sticking out. I would use both hands and I couldn’t do it. I’d think, “Man, what is the deal?” I mean, he was only using a little, twenty-ounce framing hammer, it wasn’t this huge hammer, [and] he was a little guy. So I [asked him], “How do you do that?”

He [said], “You’ve got to hold your tongue right,” and he looked at me and [said], “You know, it’s a lot quicker if you only hit the nail once.” To this day, I still can’t do it. The only way I can nail a nail in all the way [at] once is if I have my nail gun.

That’s kind of how it is with the gospel: for most people, one blow of the gospel isn’t enough. Sure, there are those times [when] somebody has never heard the gospel, he doesn’t know anything about it, he hears it for the first time, God softens his heart, he breaks down, repents, and gives his life to Christ and is saved, but that is the rare instance. Usually you have to strike [a person] multiple times [with the gospel]. If you’ve been here for baptism testimonies, you [have] heard people say, “Yeah, so-and-so shared the gospel with me, and several years later another person [did], and several years [after that] another person [did].” Sometimes it’s so fun to hear the testimony of how God just rains down the gospel on [people].

People say, “Yeah, everywhere I went it was the gospel. My neighbor was preaching to me, and then I went here and my coworker was preaching to me. Then somebody else was telling me how Jesus loves me, how He died on the cross. I’d turn on the radio... I never listen to the radio and all of a sudden I just got stuck there, and this guy was telling me to repent and give my life to Jesus. I couldn’t escape. God just hunted me down! He

struck me, and struck me, and struck me until finally the gospel went in, the Holy Spirit opened my heart, and I was saved.” That’s how it works. People say, “I shared the gospel with my brother, but he didn’t want to hear it.” Hit him again! Hit him again!

The disciples would go into a town [and] maybe stay there [for] a week. They’d sit at [a] public street and they would talk to people, and preach the gospel. Crowds would gather. Some people would hear the gospel once, or twice, or three, or four [times]. Maybe they’d be there all seven days and hear [the disciples preach] every single day. Some would hear it every time and they wouldn’t repent. The disciples would move on. During the interval between when they left and when Jesus was coming, the Word of God would begin to work in the heart[s of the people who had heard and not repented], and they would be more and more convicted about their sin. “Man, I’m going to hell! Those guys did miracles. This must be of God!” Jesus would come with His Twelve, and many more would come to repentance. We learn that one of the strategies for evangelizing is [to] do it more than once. A lot of times people need more than one blow of the truth before the truth sinks in. Be persistent. Keep on sharing the gospel. Never give up.

Pursue God’s purpose in saving you, partner with others in ministry, plan to share the gospel with people [more than once], and fourth: Pray for more laborers to proclaim the gospel. Look at [Luke 10:]2: “And He was saying to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” Jesus tells them, “Man, there is a great harvest in Israel. It’s burgeoning, it’s bountiful, it’s a bumper crop. But, man, the laborers, they are few.” Remember, Jesus was leaving the area of Galilee, which had quite a population, [to go to] the area south of the Sea of Galilee, and north of Jerusalem. How many people were in there? [There were] probably a couple 100,000 people. That’s not very many people, is it? Jesus is sending [the seventy] to cities He’s going to go [to]. He can’t go to that many cities, so you’re thinking, “Well, seventy seems like [a lot],” but Jesus sees them as few.

Farmers have lost their entire crops because they missed the window of harvest. I used to drive by this field [where] this alfalfa farmer grew these big, lush fields of alfalfa. At the end of summer, right before fall was coming, he [and his farm hands] would cut it and they'd stack it into these loose rows. Then after three or four days of drying in the sun, they'd flip it over and let it dry a little bit more, and then they'd come back with a hay baler and they'd bale it all up. Then they'd pick up the bales and stack them in the barn for feed. Well, this one time, he had cut his hay, and he had turned it over, and was just getting ready to bale [it], and then it rained for two weeks straight. All [of] that hay molded, so it was good for nothing except to be tilled back into the ground. He lost the whole crop.

When the window of opportunity for harvesting comes, you have to take action. When Jesus says, "Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers," that word "send out" means to send them out in urgency, in haste, [to] hurry because this is the window of opportunity. Every day people are dying and dropping into hell. Take action because we're not talking about a crop here, we're talking about *souls*. Jesus says, "Send out laborers," not loafers, laborers. Not lukewarm professing Christians who never tell anybody about Jesus, but hard, toiling laborers because seventy gospel preachers is not enough for a couple 100,000 people.

There are 18 million people in the Greater Los Angeles area. How many of those [people] do you think are Christians, born-again believers who love Jesus? One million? Two million? Let's just say for exaggerating [purposes], there are nine million on-fire believers. I wish to God it were true. Would you be fine with having [the other] nine million people damned to hell? Think about it. Would you consider that a good harvest—to get half the crop out? Even if you're involved in ministry, even if you're doing what you can, you have a job, you have a wife, you have a kid, you have to mow the lawn or whatever. You've got all these things in your life, and you're doing what you can. You're serving, you're playing your part in the church. You know what? It's just not enough. What are you going to do? Well, *you* can't do anything, so what do you do? You beseech the Lord of the harvest

to send out more laborers. It should be one of those things that's just etched with a diamond stylus on your mind. Put [it] at the very top of your prayer journal so that every time you pray, [you say], "Lord, send out more laborers. We need more laborers." He commands you to do it. Do it. It's one of the strategies God gives us for doing evangelism.

Fifth: [Prepare to be persecuted]. Look at [Luke 10:]3. Jesus says: "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." What does this mean? I think it's pretty clear: wolves eat lambs. When you go about doing your Master's business, what are you going to find? You're going to find that people don't like you. People [will] slander you. People [will] gossip about you. You might not get promoted, you might lose a job, you might lose relationships and friendships, and things like that. Why? [It is] because when you live for Christ, ungodly men and ungodly women will devour you any way they can because they don't like Jesus in you.

Recently I was sent a series of pictures taken by a hunter from a tree stand. He happened to be up in a tree stand scoping things out, and a moose came along. The first frame shows a moose and two wolves in the lower right-hand corner of the picture. The next frame shows the moose with about ten wolves—the whole wolf pack—attacking it. [In] the next frame they are having moose dinner. Now, moose weigh 1,500 pounds, [so] what do you think a whole wolf pack [would do] to a little lamb? One wolf could take [a lamb] out in a second.

Jesus says, "I'm sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." Why does He do that? Does Jesus have some sort of suicide complex? Was there glory in Custer's last stand? Remember the Alamo! Fight to the death! Is that all about, "Get yourselves glory and fight to the bloody end!"? Is that what it's about, or is there something else? We have read Hebrews 11. Didn't Samson give his life in defeating the enemies of God? Didn't Jephthah have to sacrifice his daughter? He's there in the text as this person of great faith. What are these people of great faith? What happens? Are they always the victors, [with] pomp and circumstance, and a big parade of people coming into town, saying, "Oh, these people are godly. They fol-

lowed God!”? The author of Hebrews describes them like this in Hebrews 11:36–38:

And others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

In the sight of the world, [they are] losers. That’s how the world sees them—a bunch of wimpy, mealy-mouthed Christian losers. God’s estimation [is that they were] men and women who were so great that this world didn’t even deserve to have the pleasure of their acquaintance, “men of whom the world was not worthy” [Hebrews 11:38]. Jesus is telling you in this text [in Luke 10 that] if you want to be His disciple, the wolves are waiting.

[This] begs a question. I don’t know about you, but I thought [when I read] this: Why would you do that? If you have the Good Shepherd, and the shepherd is there to protect the sheep, then why would He send the sheep out into the wolves? Don’t you wonder about that? Doesn’t that seem kind of contradictory? What’s going on here? Is Jesus just sitting around, [saying], “I’m sending you out there, bwa ha ha ha. Look at [you] getting ripped up!”? Is [it] some sort of sadistic pleasure [for Him]?

Most of us in North America don’t realize it, but more Christians have been martyred for the cause of Christ in the last 100 years than [in] the previous 19 centuries combined. Did you know that? [Think of] all the people who were killed in the early Church, and [by] Nero, and the Roman persecutions, and the persecutions at the end of the Dark Ages, and the Reformations, [when] all those thousands and thousands were slaughtered. [Take the people from] all those nineteen centuries, [and] add them all up,

[and] more people have been killed for the cause of Christ in the last 100 years. Most people don't realize that. Every day around the world—today, in our time—people are dying for Jesus. Go to persecution.com, sign up for their prayer letter, and get a clue. Muslim-, communist-, [and] Hindu-dominated countries are killing Christians for the mere fact that they are Christians and they want to follow Jesus. That's it, that's their crime.

Why do you suppose God would allow this? Why doesn't He intervene? Why doesn't He protect them? Why does He send them out as sheep, or lambs, in the midst of wolves? Well, sometimes He does protect them, [and] sometimes He doesn't. Why would He call you to suffer for Him? Why would you have to lose your job, or be isolated from your family whom you love, or that friend you've had for many years because you shared the gospel with them, they got mad, and they don't want to talk to you anymore? Why? There are several reasons. The big one is that it glorifies God. It glorifies God. How is that? Let me tell you. Here are five [reasons God allows His followers to be persecuted]. These aren't all of them.

Persecution, first of all, demonstrates to the world how much the followers of Christ love Him. Remember when Jesus said, "No greater love has any man than this, that he" what? "He lay down his life for his friends" [see John 15:13]. When you go out there and you're doing gospel ministry, and you're suffering for the cause of Jesus, what are you saying? "I love Jesus. I love Jesus enough to suffer for Him." Is that a good thing, that the world sees your love for Jesus? Yes.

Second, persecution demonstrates the grace of God in a believer's life. The world is watching you suffer in a God-honoring way. They're looking at you, and they're [thinking], "Man, look at that person." [It is] like the centurion who looked up at Jesus dying on the cross, [and Jesus said], "Father, forgive them." [The centurion said], "Surely this was the Son of God" [see Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39]. Why? [It is] because he saw the grace of God in Christ, [in] His kindness, His love for His killers. There are so many stories in church history of people being burned at the stake. [As] they [were] get[ting] tied up to the stake, they were singing hymns to God.

There was no cursing, no stressing out, no gnashing of teeth, no anger, no bitterness. They just entrusted themselves to God and died this incredible death, and people saw that and they were so blown away at the grace of God in that person's life [that] they repented and gave their lives to Christ. Persecution is good because it demonstrates God's grace through those who are being persecuted.

Third, persecution helps us share in the sufferings of Christ. When you suffer like Jesus did (but always to a lesser degree), you remember [His suffering]. [When] you do something, you're trying to do what's right, you're trying to share the gospel, you're trying to minister to somebody and they get mad at you, or whatever it is, you realize, "Man, Jesus went through a lot more than this for me. [He] was persecuted His whole ministry, and finally falsely tried, and scourged. They made Him carry His cross through town. They put that crown of thorns on His head. They nailed Him to a cross. Man, He must really love me." It gives you this affection because you have shared in the sufferings of Christ. You have suffered for the cause of Jesus, and it makes you love Jesus more because in suffering you realize what He went through, only more, to bring you to salvation. Is this good? Yes.

Fourth, persecution brings blessing to believers. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:11, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me." He says, "Blessed are you. I give you blessing. If you suffer for Me, I am going to bless you." Is that good? Who doesn't want more blessing from Jesus?

Fifth, persecution places you in good company. Right after Jesus said what He did in Matthew 5:11, in verse 12, He says, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." You are in good company. Who wants to be in the company of Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, David, Jesus, Paul? I do. You're in good company with the most godly men and women who have ever lived [when you endure persecution].

There are policemen, firemen, [and] military personnel who put their lives on the line every single day to save people from physical death. While a few of them do it out of love, most of them do it for money. Daredevils risk their lives for money, fame, [and] to entertain people. Don't you think it would be worth it to suffer to save people from eternal hellfire? Jesus says, "I send you out" [in Luke 10:3], and this is the kicker. If the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep, and if the Good Shepherd sends you out, you know His grace will be sufficient for you. He's never going to send you out and abandon you. He always gives you grace to do everything He calls you to do. You never have to worry about being out there. He never leaves you, He never forsakes you [see Hebrews 13:5]. Even if they kill you, you'll live. You'll live for eternity with Him in glory, and the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to you if you know Jesus [see Romans 8:18].

You need to pursue God's purpose in saving you, partner with other people in ministry, plan to share the gospel with people more than once, pray for more laborers to be sent out into the harvest, prepare to be persecuted, and sixth: Place your trust in God to provide for you. Look at [Luke 10:]4: "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes." Just think about that. In a modern context, Jesus [might] say, "I'm going to send you out. I want you to take a trip around California, around the state. Don't take any gas money. Don't do any maintenance on your car. No suitcase, no shampoo, no toothbrush. Just take what you're wearing [and] get out of Dodge." That would be a little [stressful].

"What happens when we run out of gas?"

"I'll take care of you. I will take care of you. When I send somebody out to do My ministry, I always provide for them."

I have students all the time in seminary come up to me, and say, "I want to talk to you about candidating. I'm thinking of going here. I'm thinking of going there. I have these opportunities." They're always getting ready to get out there because they've been scraping by as seminary students, and

they're [thinking], "I just can't wait to get paid on a regular basis, and have a consistent income."

One student came up to me, and [said], "I'm thinking of taking a church overseas, but I don't know if I'm going to be able to survive over there."

"Really? Really?" I [said], "Well, this is what you need to do. You pray about it, you investigate the church, you make your decision [about] whether you're going to go or not, and then you let God provide for you."

"Why?"

"Because He says He will!"

What if that seminary student were to say, "What if I don't get paid enough?" What if a seminary student said that to you? What counsel would you give him?

Would you say, "Well, you're probably right. God has probably lied to you in His Word. He's not going to fulfill His promise. Soon, you'll have used up all your savings, you'll be starving and begging in the street. You'll probably die. I'm sure of it. Yeah, don't trust God. As a matter of fact, I'd worry about it, and make sure you cover your bases because, after all, you've got to be in control"? You expect that from a baby Christian, but not from a graduate of Master's Seminary.

My counsel is always the same: "God will provide for you if He calls you to go anywhere. So, first, determine whether or not God's calling you to go there, then just trust Him."

I had one seminary student who went to another country [with his wife]. I gave him that same advice, and he said, "OK, I'm going to trust God," and he did. They weren't paying him enough, and [they were] scrimping by, and [they] started digging into [their] savings, and pretty soon they [had] cut out everything [extra] in their budget. They stopped enjoying all those little, frugal indulgences like eating out and doing things that they had done before. They were down to the bare [essentials], eating the least expensive things, [but] they were still falling into financial ruin, it appeared. But they kept entrusting themselves to God. They kept praying, remembering God's promises, and laboring hard in the ministry. Then the wife became preg-

nant. Now there was going to be another mouth to feed along with the expenses [of] having a baby. The temptation to worry increased because they had more needs. [The student] was working with his budget, and realized, “Man, it’s such a lean, mean machine that that’s it.”

He [went] to an elder meeting, and the elders [asked], “How are you doing?”

He said, “Well, you know, we’re scraping by. All our needs are met, but we’re [just] scraping by. I’ve been working on my budget,” and he threw it down, and said, “This is where we are.”

The elders said, “Wow, we aren’t paying you enough. We’re going to give you a raise, and then we’re going to retroactively pay you for all the months we weren’t paying you enough.” Now, who did that? God did that. God did it, and He did it for their good because they needed to learn to trust in Him. They needed to learn, as the song says, “Jesus never fails.” He *never* fails. Do you think God would call somebody to the gospel ministry and then abandon him? Then you don’t know God, you don’t know the Word of God, and your faith is dead. God always provides for those He calls into ministry. He *cannot* fail. He is the God who *cannot* lie.

One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 37. Verses 23–25 read:

The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand. I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread.

We could all write down right now [the names of] all those faithful gospel servants of Christ we know who right now are starving and begging in the street. There aren’t any because God cannot break His Word. Now, they might not have as much as they want, they may not be able to have [a] house, and cars, and [a] jet ski, but Jesus never fails. If God were ever to break one of His promises, it would un-God Him. Whatever ministry

He's calling you into, however inadequate you may feel that you are, and [however] low on resources [you think you are], Christ is adequate enough for you. His grace is sufficient for you [see 2 Corinthians 12:9]. He will provide for you. And, just to teach you a lesson, He'll probably wait until the very last second. That's what He does in my life.

He says, "Oh, you're going to preach to other people. Let's just wait until the end."

Then right when I'm [thinking], "OK, Lord, it's five minutes away," then it happens. It's like, "Oh, praise God!"

You need to leave here today pursuing God's purpose in saving you, partnering with others in ministry, planning to share the gospel with people more than once, praying for laborers to be sent out into the harvest, preparing to be persecuted, [and] placing your trust in Christ to provide for you. Remember, Jesus never fails. He never fails. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this text. What a great text it is. It just gives us the whole gamut of principles we need to do any ministry no matter [to] what degree. Father, You are a good God, and in Your Word there are treasures, treasures to hold on to, to ponder, to meditate [on], and live out. Father, help us all at Calvary Bible Church to be more faithful, to put these things into practice. And, Father, there [are people] here right now who don't know You, they know they don't know You, they know they don't love You, they know, Father, that hell is waiting unless they repent. Father, help them to realize that today is the day of salvation [see 2 Corinthians 6:2], that Christ died on the cross for sinners, that He commands all men everywhere to repent, and if they repent and trust only in Jesus to save them, they will be saved. They will be transformed. They will be born again. You will give them your Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts, and turn them into gospel ministers in whatever sphere You have chosen for them. Father, help us to be the kind of church that models Your manual for harvesting souls. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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