

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 10- Luke 10:1-24**

195- The Five Portraits of a Kingdom Ministry- Part 4

March 24, 2013

Luke 10:1-24

1 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.

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.**

3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

4 Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.

5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace *be* to this house.'

6 If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

7 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.

8 Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

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

12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.

15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!

16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.

20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

22 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."

23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see,

24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*."

To the Glory of God

Now as I said last week- this Passage is somewhat lengthy- but I wanted to take it as a whole in order to get the flavor of what Jesus was teaching here and then divide it up into about five parts.

1. The Characteristics of Biblical Evangelism (Luke 10:1-4)
2. The Message of a Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:5-11)
3. The Divine Warning of Rejecting the Gospel (Luke 10:12-16)
4. The Danger of Pride in Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:17-20)
5. The Delight of God in Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:21-24)

Now last week we began to look at the second part and today- if God is pleased- I want to *continue* to examine the *second* part of what Jesus was teaching in this Passage and that is:

2. A Biblical Ministry Has a Biblical Message

So let's look again at **Luke 10:5-11** together:

5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace *be* to this house.'

6 If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

7 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.

8 Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

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

Now the primary subject that Jesus is dealing with here is what is the Message that we are supposed to preach? And the answer to that question is found in the last part of verse 9 that says:

...say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

And in this simple Message of the Kingdom- which is the Gospel- there are two points:

A. Peace

B. Punishment

Either people said, “Yes” to the good news of the Kingdom, or they said, “No”. And that's what comes out in this very simple little Passage. The Message of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Kingdom is either for eternal Peace or it is for eternal Punishment. You believe and trust

and you receive eternal Peace with God with all of the eternal benefits that come along with that or you reject the Message of the Kingdom and you receive eternal Punishment from God with all the eternal terrors that come along with that. And we went over that in great detail last week. Now today I want you to look closely again at verse 7:

Luke 10:7

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.

Now why in the world did Jesus say to stay in that house? Why not go somewhere else? Well, in context- this had to do with these 70 men being human beings who would be tempted to find better accommodations and better food. So Jesus is telling them, *"Don't look for anything better. Accept what God has Sovereignly provided for you in the house that you are in."* Now Jesus said the same thing back in **Luke 9** when He chose the Apostles. **Luke 9:4** says:

"Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.

So Jesus was telling them, *"Whatever house you enter, stay there and make that the center of your operations. Go out from there but stay in that house."* Now this seems to be a strange charge to give to these men but when you study about life in Israel the 1st Century- you find out that it was very typical of the false prophets and the false teachers of that day to always be looking for the most comfortable situation they could find. They had a reputation in that day of always looking for the place where they could get the most money and acquire the most power and accumulate the most favors.

So they would go into a home and they would take whatever the home had to offer. They would milk that place dry and then move on to somewhere else. And they were always and relentlessly moving up the socio-economic ladder of that day- taking money and favor and political power from as many as they could to better themselves.

That was the pattern for the *false* teachers. That was *their* reputation. And it goes back to the fact that false teachers are *always* in ministry for either the money or the prestige or the political power or

the recognition or a combination of all of those things. They are always in ministry for filthy lucre.

It is very rare to find a false teacher who somehow hasn't managed to fleece the sheep and make money off his lies and deceptions to live lavish lifestyles off the backs of the people who have been deceived by him. And that's what they do because that is who they are.

So the false prophets of Israel in the 1st Century had a reputation of taking advantage of as many people as they could; go to as many houses as they could; find as many comforts as were available to pad their own nest and better their own lives.

So to walk counterintuitive to the reputation of the false teachers and to put forth a testimony of integrity and honor- Jesus says when His men found a worthy place; when they found a “son of peace” for the sake of fellowship, for the sake of comfort, for the sake of discipleship and for the sake of integrity and sincerity and honesty and as an example that sets you apart from false teachers- they were to stay there and they were not to go around to seek a better place. Don't seek more food than what they give you. If the food is meager- that is what God has provided. If it's disgusting or unappetizing- too bad. Ask God to bless it as you choke it down.

And this goes so far as to include whether that food was clean or unclean and whether it was food offered to idols and whether it was a Jewish house or a Gentile house. Jesus said- no matter- you stay there and you humbly accept the accommodations and accept the food that is provided and you are not to be discontent with any of it because I do not want you to be acting like the false teachers.

So what about the Jewish dietary laws? Weren't these men required by the Divine Revelation of the Old Covenant to be faithful to the Jewish dietary law? Not anymore. Jesus has already taught them that it was not what goes *into* a man that defiles him but what comes *out of* the man that defiles him. Being defiled before God has to do with what is in your heart and what comes out of your mouth and what motivates you and what you set your affections on and what you love and desire- not the food that God has blessed for you to eat that goes into your mouth.

So Jesus- in His Authority as God- has already set aside those dietary laws. And from that time until now- they would never be in force again. Also Jesus is going all over the place- eating food without

ceremonially washing His hands and ignoring the rabbinical customs of that day. And He is doing whatever healing He wanted to do on the Sabbath day- spurning the false man-made traditions that had grown up around the true revelation of the Sabbath.

So Jesus wants the world see that the men He has chosen live for the Gospel of Peace- and *not* for their own personal gain. And this way to go about true Gospel Ministry will set you apart from false teachers very rapidly because it involves a Biblical Principle found in verse 7 called:

The Laborer is Worthy of His Wages

... and that is that the Minister is to labor among those who value the Gospel; those who see eternal Worth in the Gospel; those who have been Sovereignly graced by God to have made Peace with God; those who are poor in spirit; those who hunger and thirst after Righteousness.

We are not to cast our pearls before swine- meaning that we are not to labor long term among those whom God is not dealing with- but we are to labor without ceasing among those who are “worthy” in the sense that we learned about last week.

And that is why all true Ministers must be called by God. This is a Calling- not a profession. And so there is an overriding Principle that guides all true Ministry and that is:

The Laborer is Worthy of His Wages

The worker in the Gospel field is worthy of his support. So Jesus tells these 70- *“Don't be reluctant to receive support for preaching the Gospel. Receive support from people who believe the Gospel- a “son of peace”.* They *should* support you. You are laboring in the greatest Work in the world and a good and faithful laborer should be supported.

And this Principle that Jesus gave the Apostles and the 70 has never been revoked. For example- in **1Timothy 5:17& 18**- we read:

17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Now this is a fascinating Passage for a number of reasons. First of all- verse 18 begins with this phrase:

For the Scripture says...

... and then it goes to quote one phrase from the Old Testament in **Deuteronomy 25:4** that says:

"You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

... but then it quotes another phrase from the *New Testament* in **Luke 10:7** that we just read that says:

The laborer is worthy of his wages

And so by quoting both an OT Passage and a NT Passage and calling both of them **"Scripture"** the Apostle Paul is giving Divine Credibility to the NT as being equally inspired as the Old.

Secondly- the word that was translated as **"rule"** here in verse 17 doesn't mean, "rule" as in what a king does or even what a CEO would do in a major Corporation. No, this word has more to do with what a Father does in his home. A godly Father doesn't just sit back and be waited on. He doesn't simply dominate his family out of sheer force or brutality. A godly father is called by God and is held accountable by God to provide, protect, lead, teach, instruct, encourage, and discipline those in his home.

But unlike a king or a CEO- a father does this labor out of genuine love for his family. And as a father demonstrates this authority and strength- he will be respected and feared and loved and admired. A man who has to constantly tell everybody that he is in charge- isn't in charge at all. A man who has to forcefully rule his home isn't ruling at all. A man who has to scream and throw things isn't respected.

You see, God has ordained men to have power and authority in both their voice and in their hand. A godly man has strength in his voice. So when a godly man speaks- in his authority as the servant leader of his home- his word is to be honored and respected. It is sinful for a man to speak in his own home and be ignored or disrespected.

And this disrespect of the father is becoming common place among the people of the modern Church as the plague of pagan feminism has taken root in many hearts today.

Now that doesn't mean that a man is always right and it doesn't mean he can't sin or that he cannot be corrected when he is wrong. Sadly, men sin all the time and have need to be corrected all the time—which is why godly men are constantly on their face before God and in the Bible and ever learning to be utterly dependent on God.

But with the knowledge that men are all sinners saved by Grace- We must teach that a godly man- nevertheless- has God ordained authority and strength in his voice and in his hand- and therefore his word should be honored and respected. One of the great casualties of 40 years of feminist ideology becoming dominant in America is that men today are almost universally dishonored and emasculated by sinful women usurping authority in the home and in the church and in the culture. That is an ungodly pattern that should be rejected by all truly regenerate saints of God.

We must remember that unlike the lost pagan world- the goal of God and therefore the goal of Christ's Church is *not* to achieve total equality among the sexes. That is a pagan concept that is neither workable nor wise. The goal of God and the Church is for God's people to know and to understand and to agree with the unique *distinctions* between men and woman and to *emphasize* and *celebrate* those differences- not seek to overlook them or work to remove them.

The same is true about a Minister of the Word of God. Those who have been called to preach and teach the Word of God are given an anointing and an unction in their voice that has Divine Authority. It isn't that the man himself is anything other than a clay pot. We must categorically reject the Roman concept of "papal infallibility". But what he says- as long as what he says is in accord with sacred Scripture- is authoritative. And those who labor in the Word of God faithfully are to be afforded what the Apostle Paul, in **1Timothy 5**, called, "*double honor*". Also in **1Corinthians 9:14** the Holy Bible says:

So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

So those who do the Work of the Lord should be sustained and

supported in that sacred Labor- no matter how meager it may be. That is their Calling and that should be the source of their wages.

So this was all about credibility. The Message was the right Message- but why would people believe it? Two reasons:

- ✓ The Moral Credibility of the Messengers
- ✓ The Divine Credibility of the Messengers

First of all- the people need to see that there's something about these Messengers that is completely *different* and *distinct* from the false teachers and the false prophets that went around to fleece the sheep and to get as much out of the masses as they could. So Jesus wants a unique integrity and a unique selflessness demonstrated by the men that He sends out and that is why He told them to stay in the one place and eat the food offered to them. That is in **Luke 10:7&8**.

Secondly there would need to be some kind of demonstration of Divine Authority and Power that would give God's official Stamp of Approval on these Messengers. And that is found in the first part of verse 9 that says:

and heal those in it who are sick...

This is the very same Divine Power and Authority over disease and even death itself that Jesus Himself has and that God the Father has. As we have discussed many times before- this was *not* the kind of shenanigans that you see today on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network- where people who are dying of cancer are prayed for by some prima donna and then coerced or manipulated to say that they feel better and then they die two weeks later of the cancer that God supposedly healed them from.

No, this was *organic* healing down to the DNA level. And this healing was *always* instantaneously and it was *always* miraculous.

And as we have discussed- this demonstration of Divine Healing was carried out by these men for the sole purpose of bringing Divine Credibility to the Gospel- *not* to make these men to be millionaires.

As I have said many times before- everybody who was sick was not healed in the Bible. And even everybody who legitimately *needed*

healing was not healed. But the few people that these men prayed for were healed instantly and miraculously.

So first of all- the men who are sent out by Jesus are utterly selfless. They're not concerned about anything for themselves and they're content with whatever God has given to them to sustain them. And secondly, they have this amazing Divine Power to heal and cast out demons which nobody else had, and the combination of those two things authenticates their Message.

So first of all, their *personal* character is verified in their contentment with whatever is given them. And then their radical Message of Salvation by Grace through Faith and not through obedience to the Law is verified by their ability to perform supernatural signs and wonders and miracles and healings. Please turn with me to read **Hebrews 2:1-4:**

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,

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

4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

Now the “**word spoken through angels**” of verse 2 is referring to the Old Testament and how God used angels to deliver that Revelation to Man. And in verse 3- the writer of **Hebrews** is comparing the superiority of the New Covenant Salvation with that of the inferiority of the Old. Now look closely again at the last part of verse 3 and verse 4:

...After it (that’s the Revelation of the New Covenant) **was at the first spoken through the Lord** (that’s Jesus Himself), **it was confirmed to us by those who heard** (and that is referring to the fact the whoever the writer of Hebrews was- he didn’t hear the Gospel directly from Jesus Himself- meaning he wasn’t an Apostle). Now look again at verse 4:

God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

And that is talking about the fact that God Himself was “testifying” as to the credibility of the New Covenant alongside the Apostles and the 70 by Sovereignly confirming what they were preaching and teaching with “**signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit**” which is the only reason these men had that ability.

The Apostles and the 70’s Ministry was validated by those supernatural manifestations and today our Ministry is verified by the supernatural manifestation of changed lives in the people who are regenerate from hearing this Gospel preached rightly and fully.

Then Jesus says at the end of **Luke 10:9**,

"And say to them, the Kingdom of God has come near to you."

So that is the Message the 70 is to preach and that is the single Message that every true Biblical Ministry is to preach.

So in our ministry as we go, first of all, we direct our efforts toward those who are eager to hear. We make it clear, secondly, that we seek nothing for ourselves. Thirdly, we validate our message not by some miracles which we're able to do, but rather by **THE** miracle of Divine Revelation- the Word of God.

And so we minister with compassion to people and we preach the Gospel of the Kingdom which is the Gospel of Peace- and that peace is eternal peace with God. And so wherever we find hearts that have been Sovereignly prepared- those sons of peace will embrace the Truth. And so our ministry will be a ministry unto that kind of peace.

But we must also understand that our Ministry is also a ministry unto eternal punishment for those who reject Jesus. And you simply cannot ignore this- verses 10 and 11. It’s a brief passage but it is direct and straightforward. But it presents the other side of this very same Gospel- which is now and has always been:

Where there is no glad reception of the King and His Kingdom but rejection, this King brings no peace with God but eternal damnation and punishment from God

... Look again at **Luke 10:10&11**:

10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

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

So you're going to go to places and they won't receive you or your Message. And we already saw one instance of this back in **Chapter 9:52**. Jesus sent messengers on ahead of Him and they entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him- but the Samaritans did not receive Him. So James and John said,

"Do You want us to call down fire from heaven and burn them to a cinder?"

And Jesus rebuked them and taught them about Mercy and turned and went to another place. So you go into the town and you give the Message and you proclaim the Kingdom and if they don't receive you and the Message- Jesus said, *"Here's what you do. You don't steal away quietly in the night. You go out into the streets and make an official and a public announcement and you announce and expose that rejection publicly."*

So the idea here about shaking the dust of your feet off is *not* some quiet judgment on rejecters but a very public judgment. You are to declare openly the absolute displeasure with that rejection. Make it as public as it possibly can be made. And make it known that they have rejected the King and the Kingdom of Peace and then you say this according to verse 11:

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

Just imagine this. These men stand in the middle of the town wiping off the dirt from that town from their feet. In the ancient near east during the 1st Century- that was the most demonstrative expression of disdain anyone could do.

When the Jews went into a Gentile country and came back to Israel- they also shook the dust off their garments and they washed the dust of the unbelieving nation off their feet so they didn't bring pagan

dust into the holy land. That showed their disdain and rejection for the Gentiles. And here are the servants of the King- the Kingdom messengers- the missionaries- who came in with the message of grace and a message of peace and a message of salvation and they leave town with a message of judgment and warning and condemnation and Divine Disdain- a public message of punishment.

And in effect they are saying, *“We will have nothing to do with you and symbolically, of course, and neither will the King, except to treat you in this same way with the same disdain and the same rejection that you have treated Him”.*

The Apostles were told to do this and now the 70 are told to do the same thing. Now keep in mind there is no record whatsoever to suggest that these men simply decided to do this on their own. No, Jesus told them to do this- so they were simply obeying the Will and the Command of Jesus.

Now why did Jesus do this? This is the final call for these people who heard the Apostles and the 70 preach the Gospel. That was the last effort to reach them. And so when these people rejected Jesus and the Gospel by rejecting the Apostles and the 70- there was nothing left to say. So Jesus said, “Just tell them that they are being rejected by the very same King that they themselves have rejected.” And Jesus told them to do this as a testimony against them.

So this is literally the Official Testimony of God Almighty against those who reject the Gospel and that is the very same public testimony that we are told to give in our day as well. The rejection of the Gospel demands a strong proclamation of the reality of that rejection.

So even though this seems to be something no civilized person would ever do in polite company- we are told here by the Lord Christ Himself to make it crystal clear that for anyone to reject Jesus Christ is to also be rejected *by* Jesus Christ. And there is simply no way to say that accurately without also saying that this means that they will spend all eternity in torment in the punishments of hell. And we must know that we have not fully obeyed Jesus’ Command here if we don’t say that. This is part and parcel of Gospel Ministry.

So this is infinitely more important than somebody trying to determine which color socks he wants to wear that day. These people have rejected Jesus Christ and His message of Peace with God and they want to be able to do that and then go watch the game- but God says

make it clear to them that this doesn't end with them rejecting Jesus. Jesus has now rejected them and they have now forfeited any peace with God.

And beloved- that is why the Ministry of the Word is so serious and so important and so all consuming. And I want to spend the remainder of my time today illustrating just how vital the Ministry of the Word is.

In **The Book of the Acts 6**- the Greek-speaking Jewish widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. This pressing need eventually came to the Apostles' attention. But the twelve said in verse 2,

The Acts 6:2b

... "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

... so they appointed seven men to take care of this need, and then the Apostles said in verse 4:

The Acts 6:4

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

So from the very earliest days of the Church- it was understood that the Ministry of the Word required so much time and effort that those who were called to this ministry should be freed from other demands. For example- as we have already seen- the Apostle Paul says in **1Timothy 5:17&18**:

17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

18 For the Scripture says, "**YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,**" and "**The laborer is worthy of his wages.**"

... in other words the Church should value the Ministry of the Word so highly that it is willing to pay Elders who devote their life to it. So this shows that this is an *ongoing* office in the Church- not merely a temporary function of the Apostles. **Ephesians 4:11** teaches that this is an office that is completely distinct from the rest of the people in the

Church, because it requires that the Pastor/Teachers are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

So we can rightly conclude that the New Testament prescribes for the NT Church that there be some people set apart for the Ministry of the Word on an ongoing basis and that these Pastor/Teachers are to devote their main life-efforts to this Ministry and be financially and materially supported by the Church.

That doesn't make these people to be prima donnas who are too good to do menial labor—but it does mean that the people of this kind of Church so values the right and full preaching and teaching of the Word of God that they want whoever is doing that preaching and teaching to be able to devote themselves to it without the other distractions of life.

So since this is so important- just what qualifies as the Ministry of the Word? At least four things:

1. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Study.
2. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Prayer.
3. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Suffering.
4. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Joy.

1. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Study.

The life of the Christian Church literally hangs on the correct and full understanding of the Word of God. And that inspired Word has come to us in the form of a collection of 66 inspired Books written by 40 different men over a 1400 year time frame in the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic languages. None of us enters this world able to read at all- let alone read and understand these ancient languages. These languages and the grammar that is associated with these languages must be learned. And if they are known at all- they will be learned by serious, deep and devoted study.

And even when they are learned- they will only become fruitful when they are used properly like mining tools- to dig out the gold and silver and the Truth of Scripture. And the only way to dig in this way is to study. The good Hand of the Lord God was upon Ezra, the Scripture says, because

Ezra 7:9b&10

9 ... the good hand of his God *was* upon him.

10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

And in **2Timothy 2:15**- Paul tells Timothy to be zealous to present himself to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed because he rightly handles the Word of Truth.

And so this is the right place to emphasize that with all the real bad books on theology that are in print today- the Ministry of study should always remain primarily a study of the Bible itself- and as much as possible- in the original languages. Philip Lindsay, a professor at Princeton in the 1900's when Theology Professors at Princeton could be trusted used to say,

"One of the best preparations for death is a thorough knowledge of the Greek grammar."

Which is simply a very pointed way of saying that pastor-teachers should do their duty and that intellectual labor in the New Testament is rewarded with real life and death Truth.

The 17th Century Puritan Richard Baxter wrote something that could save many young pastors years of regret in misdirected study when he said,

"Till at last, being by my sickness cast far from home, where I had no book but my Bible, I set to study the truth from thence, and so, by the blessing of God, discovered more in one week than I had done before in seventeen years' reading, hearing, and wrangling."

So Ministers of the Word must beware of the temptation to replace the Study of Scripture with the reading of good books *about* the Scripture. If you want to know if a man has studied well- don't ask him to show you his library. Ask him to show you his sermons and his teaching where he has recorded his own authentic insights into the Word of God.

We make a great mistake when we think that study consists mainly in reading (as commonly understood)—even reading the Bible. Many think they have studied well when they have spent the morning

reading through some worthy book of Divinity. And thus the measure of our study becomes the number of books that we have read. But my own conviction is that fruitful study is primarily about *thinking* and *not* reading. My guess is that reading, which was meant to become a stimulus and guide to independent thinking, usually becomes a substitute for it. And the evidence for this is how many books we read and how little we write down. Fresh thinking must always be put down on paper to get it clear and preserve it for use. Much reading and little thinking makes for a second-hand pastor because you simply cannot preach and teach second-hand truths with power.

So the Ministry of the Word is a ministry of study. And the ministry of study should be devoted primarily to the Bible. And the study of the Bible should consist very much in thinking and writing about what it says.

And we need to guard against the modern cry for relevancy. The faithful study and teaching of God's Word will do more to change the world than anyone imagines. J.C. Ryle wrote,

"To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the lunatic, the idiot, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible leavened the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Alas, many sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who little think how great are their own obligations to the Bible."

2. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Prayer

Benjamin Warfield, the great evangelical theologian who died in 1921, wrote in 1911 about the kind of criticism that comes to those who believe in much study. Someone said to him that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books.

"What, more than ten hours over your books on your knees?"

Combat officers do not haggle about whether it is better for a soldier to have a right leg or a left leg. Soldiers should have both legs.

Likewise- the Minister of the Word must not choose between Study and Prayer. Study without prayer is the work of sinful arrogance and prayer without study is sinful presumption. This is what the Proverbs teach:

Proverbs 2:3-5

**3 For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding;
4 If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures;
5 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God.**

Prayer humbles the heart and gives it the tone of Christ and makes it ready and open and sensitive to the Truth of Scripture. But it is study that brings in the Truth and fills the heart with joy and power.

The Ministry of the Word is a ministry of prayer because in prayer the minister meets God and has real living dealings with the Almighty so that his preaching and teaching have the aroma of God about them. The Ministry of the Word must be a ministry of earnestness and intensity, and where are these to be found if not in our private meetings with God where you learn to know if you are real or just playing games?

One great Baptist pastor, Hezekiah Harvey, put it like this back in 1879:

"Moral earnestness can never be assumed; it is the attribute only of a soul profoundly feeling the power and reality of divine truth. The man, therefore, who would speak God's word with the pungency and fervor of a Bunyan, a Baxter, a Flavel, or a Payson must, like them, be constant and fervent in prayer. The springs of spiritual life opened in the closet will pour forth never-failing streams of life in the pulpit."

Without much prayer all the study in the world will leave us shallow and lean. Without prayer there creeps in what Richard Cecil called

"The low, managing, contriving, maneuvering temper of mind among us."

E.M. Bounds is right when he says,

"What the Church needs today is not more machinery or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use— men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer."

3. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Suffering.

The Bible is God's artillery in the war against sin and Satan. And when you get recruited for the artillery, you can count on being wounded. Listen to three verses in Paul's second letter to the young pastor of the Church at Ephesus- Timothy.

2Timothy 1:8

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

2Timothy 1:11-12

11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

2Timothy 2:3

Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

It belongs to soldiers to suffer for the war effort. No soldier in conflict expects things to be easy or comfortable. When God calls us into the ministry of the Word, he recruits us into front-line artillery action. It is not a safe place to be.

But strangely enough it is the place Paul wants to be. He said in Philippians that he counted everything as loss that he might

Philippians 3:10

... know Him and the power of His resurrection and ⁶the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Paul attained a powerful authenticity in carrying Christ's word because he chose to walk in Christ's way. He said at the end of Galatians,

Galatians 6:17

From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

When you have been wounded in the service of the Word of Christ and have not gone AWOL or hated your enemy, there comes a new certainty and depth and power.

Therefore every true Minister of the Word should say with the Apostle Paul,

The Acts 20:24

I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus,

4. The Ministry of the Word is a Ministry of Joy.

I sometimes think of the dozens of vocational options that lie open before me. I could go back to school and re-enter the financial planning industry where I started or perhaps get into law where my freshman aptitude tests said I was supposed to go.

But could I really do that? I may not always be what God has called me to be- but I cannot deny and I will not deny that God has indeed called me. Therefore I am enslaved to the joy of the Ministry of the Word. This is what I do because this is who I am.

I say with Paul,

Philippians 2:17&18

17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

18 You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Paul reminded the pastor-teachers of Ephesus that in the ministry of the Word it is always more blessed to give than to receive. And to the Thessalonians he wrote,

1Thessalonians 2:19&20

19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

20 For you are our glory and joy.

Jesus dealt with the Apostles and with these 70 and with all those who have been Called to be Ministers of the Word because there is no better way to spend a brief life on this little earth than to spend it in the ministry of the Word. Because:

- ✓ What you study is the endless terrain of the infinite Glory of God
- ✓ The One you pray to is the majestic Sovereign Whose Hand no one can stay
- ✓ What you suffer is for the highest Cause in the universe
- ✓ What you enjoy is the very Delight of God in His Son and in those He died to save.

Amen. Let us pray.