



Christ's Perfect Provision-Part 10

When You've Been Rejected

Pastor Mike Fabarez

We know it's true from Jennifer Aniston to Benjamin Netanyahu. There are a lot of people in our world this week that know what it is to be snubbed. That was for those of you that track the news. But even if you don't track the news, and your name is not in the headlines, I doubt there's very many of us that can't identify with the pain and frustration, probably in our recent past, of someone in some situation snubbing us, passing us over, excluding us—use the harsh word—rejecting us.

I don't care if you're from the most loving, most affectionate, most warm, caring family in the world—it didn't take long on planet Earth to experience those cold, harsh, painful feelings of someone pushing you back—no thanks—rejecting you. Perhaps you had an experience back in your adolescence, as I did—might as well have been Jennifer Aniston. The dream of every junior higher. There she was. And I finally got the gumption to—and she was Jennifer—Jennifer Lee was her name. And we have a couple Jennifer Lees in the church, and neither of those are the one I'm talking about right now. Very common name, you know. But I finally got the gumption to ask her out, and she looked into my tender junior high eyeballs, looked me up and down, and just said... devastating, demoralizing, crushing. I'm over it now. I really recovered—it took some time.

But it feels—that pain—it's in that same spectrum of the feeling we feel, no matter what the situation. It could be a promotion, it could be a job, it could be a friendship, it could be some betrayal in your circle of friends—whatever it is, it's that feeling of being pushed back and rejected. And what can make it even worse is when you know you are absolutely in the right. And there's nothing more that makes you feel like you're in the right than if someone rejects you because of your association with Christ.

Sometimes we'd like to think, "Well, if I'm a Christian, maybe it won't hurt as bad." No, it hurts. Hurts real bad. "Maybe if I'm a Christian, and I'm growing and I'm changing, I'm becoming this more righteous person—well, maybe it won't happen as often." No, no—gonna happen even more often. The Bible is very clear.

Well, as we reach the end of our ten-part series in the heart of Luke 9, we've come to verse 51, which starts this little description of a scene that I think we can all readily identify with, where you see the visceral reaction of the apostles—James and John, specific—when they had that indignant response



over rejection, and rejection for something that I think you and I would at least have some feelings of indignation incoming. Hurts—let’s just be honest about why we sometimes react so violently, frustrated, such deep, hard and poignant emotions when we’re rejected—it’s painful.

Christ is making a major transition in this passage. And just having this described the way it is reminds us that being closely associated with Christ certainly doesn’t exempt you from rejection—matter of fact, it ramps it up—and it doesn’t somehow magically subdue, at least not immediately, these visceral and responsive kind of angry reactions to it.

So let’s read it here. As we walk through it, we need some explanation, because if you’ve been tracking with what we’ve been doing here, at least geographically in the text, we always find we’re in these cities all around the northern part of Israel, near the Sea of Galilee. As a matter of fact, a lot of what we’ve studied in Luke so far has taken place on the Sea of Galilee. And if you know the life of Christ, it starts down in Bethlehem, which is south of Jerusalem, which is in the southern part of the land of Israel. And you also know that there’s been some travel back and forth for various things. One of the most important—early on we see his trip as a 12-year-old to the temple at one of the pilgrimages that were required of the Jewish people. And so we know he’s traveled back and forth. But this time, he’s going from the northern part of Israel to the southern part to finish his earthly ministry, and here’s how it’s described—verse 51:

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up”—that’s the biggest way possible to say he’s going to end his earthly ministry and be returned to the glory that he had before the incarnation—the ascension—“he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

Now, that’s an idiom, but it’s supposed to speak to us about a real strong resolve: I’ve set my face together; I am resolved to do this. Why—why such dramatic language? Well, you know where this ramps up in terms of the apex of emotion—in the garden—because what’s waiting for him in Jerusalem is the most painful, most dreadful act in the incarnation, and that’s the cross. And you remember how that is working out where he says—and we get the record of his prayer—“not my will, but yours be done,” based on the fact that “if there’s any other way to do this, let this cup pass from me.”

So for him to say, “Okay, now we’re nearing the end of the ministry. Now I have to go to Jerusalem,” and he’s already told them—even in this chapter—to suffer and be rejected by the chief priests. So here we go: we’re going from Galilee—Jewish area—to Judea and Jerusalem in the southern area. And you know he’s going to be crucified right outside the city walls of Jerusalem.



Now, this—by the way—it’s been many weeks since I’ve made this connection. But when they do travel back and forth from Galilee to Jerusalem on foot, that’s about a—at a good pace—that’s about a three-day journey. It’d be like us saying, “Hey, after church, we’re gonna head on over to Chicago—we’re gonna drive there,” and you’re going to have to make some preparation along the way—unless you have an RV or something—and you’re gonna have to say, “Okay, well, we’ll stop here, and then we’ll stop there.” Well, that’s practically what they’re gonna have to figure out.

“So he sent messengers ahead of him.” He didn’t have to do that; he could have stuck with his own entourage. But he does this, and I think for good reason—there’s so many parallels to what every disciple would feel for the rest of the church age; I’ll make that connection in a minute. But off these people go—they don’t have Christ in their little, their little advanced party—the recon—into this village, but they’re sent, and they’re there to represent Christ. “And they entered a village of the Samaritans.”

Now, between the Jewish region in the north of Israel and the southern region was this middle part, and that was called Samaria. Samaria, you might remember, becomes distinct from what certainly is going on in Jerusalem and Judea in the south because the kingdom split ten centuries before Christ. You might remember the people chose a king—his name was Saul. God said, “That wasn’t too good. Let me pick the next one, David.” He wasn’t perfect, but he was a man after God’s own heart. He has a boy with a silver spoon in his mouth named Solomon. A lot of good things happened—at least in terms of financial prosperity for Israel. And then he had a son named Rehoboam. And unfortunately, he looked to his pals and his buddies instead of the wise consultants, and he split the kingdom in half. And the kingdom from that point on was torn in two. And we had the northern part that was often called Ephraim and the southern part called Judah. And those two areas were distinctly ruled by separate kings.

Now, in the north—you know, I trust you know—it didn’t last as long as the southern kingdom: ten tribes to the north, two tribes to the south. And in 721 BC—years before Christ—we have the Assyrians, the world power, come in and pretty much decimate the northern tribes. Matter of fact, today you often hear people talking about the “ten lost tribes of Israel.” That’s a bit of a misnomer, because God didn’t misplace any of them, and he knows where they are. And certainly, even in the first century, we see some people identified with northern tribes. So even they knew a lot more than we seem to think that we know concerning where those are.



So anyway, what does that mean? Well, that means they didn't have that distinct identity—hailed off to Assyria and brought back—like, you know, if you've read the book of Daniel, that's what happened with the southern kingdom. 586 BC, the world power is now Babylon—Babylon and the king Nebuchadnezzar come in, wipe out the southern kingdom, destroy the temple, destroy Jerusalem, and they take some prisoners off to Babylon. Daniel's there—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—as their Babylonian names are familiar to us. They're there. Well, what happened? Seventy years later, they come back. They keep their distinct Jewish heritage.

Now, what happened to the northern tribes? Well, the problem is they did a lot of intermarrying; they kind of lost their identity. They became, at least in the minds of the Jewish people in the south, sellouts—because, you know, you don't even care about your Jewish lineage, you don't even care that you are the seed of Abraham. So, you know what, you guys are losers. "Well, we want to come worship in Jerusalem." "No, you can't." And there was a huge divide. They created their own worship center. They created their own capital city. And there was no good relations—obviously, if you've been in Sunday school, you know—between the Samaritans and the Jews.

Now, a lot of people got around this. If they lived in the northern Jewish communities up around Galilee, to get down here to Judea and Jerusalem, well, they just went on the other side over here, which was Perea—or now is Jordan—and they skipped outside of the Samaritan villages. And they kind of got around it that way—took a couple of nights to sleep, and then they were there.

Well, Jesus didn't have that philosophy—he was willing to plow right through Samaria. And you might remember in John 4, one of his early travels through Samaria, he ends up at a city called Sychar, and a woman at the well—leads her to Christ; she, with the disciples' help, leads a bunch of other people to Christ. So here are the Samaritans being led to faith in the Messiah.

Well, he's going to head back to Jerusalem; he's going to plow right through the middle of Samaria. The problem is when they go with their little advanced team to figure out where they're going to stay that night, to make preparations for him, verse 53—as you might expect—they went into the village of the Samaritans to make preparations. Verse 53: "But the people did not receive him." Now, that's not a big surprise, you might say. But they've made it through there before. Here's the reason: we're just passing through; we're on our way to the capital of the Jewish people from the southern kingdom—we're going to Jerusalem. "People did not receive him because he had set his face toward Jerusalem."



Now when his disciples James and John saw it—they had a nickname, by the way. A lot of the apostles had nicknames, and we learn about it in the Gospel of Mark. Theirs was an Aramaic term that translates “Sons of Thunder.” Remember hearing that—Sons of Thunder? Here’s one of the reasons we know that was a well-chosen nickname by Christ. “Hey, they don’t want to—they don’t want us to stay at their Motel 8.” James and John saw, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Don’t mind having a couple guys on your staff with that attitude: “Boss, they’re gonna snub you. How about we just fry the whole town? That’d be all right.”

Jesus says in verse 55—no—“He turned and rebuked them.” Now, you don’t need to tell me the posture of Christ here. Here’s another literary signal that Christ is making a stern rebuke. Now, you and I want to know what he said. That’s why later you had a lot of scribes put in the margin little imaginative references as to what he might have said, and it ended up in some late Greek manuscripts that ended up in a couple of English translations that we have today. But the original text just gave us—at least—the summary. We’d like to know what he said, but he told us what he did: he turned to them, he faced them, he squared them up, and he rebuked them—“No.” That’s a strong word. No, stop it. That’s wrong. Verse 56: “And they went on to another village.”

So we have here a rejection of the advanced team. It was reported to James and John and all the rest. And they said, “That makes us angry; that makes us indignant—we should get back at them. We should torch the town.” Jesus says no and moves on.

What do we make of that? Well, without over-spiritualizing verses 51 through 53, can we look at those verses again and just recognize that Christ is on a mission? He didn’t have to send an advanced team—some recon guys out there—he could have just gone with his group, his entourage, showed up, knocked on some doors, and found a place. But instead he sends his advanced team—his, I like the word here, “messengers.” You know, that’s a word that’s applied to us—messengers. And they get there and say, “Would you be willing to put us up? We got a large entourage here of Jewish guys, and we’ve also got the guy that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel talked about—we’ve got the Son of Man, we’ve got the Messiah. He’s proved himself. Hey, would you let us stay here? Messiah is coming.”

That word “messenger” is often ramped up to the next level—the word translated “herald,” or one who proclaims. That’s the standard word that’s used when the king is coming. The advanced team gets everybody ready. And the Bible says that’s what we are. As a matter of fact, the word for the herald and what he does is the word that’s translated throughout the Bible “to preach.” And I know that’s not real popular anymore. If you talk too much about Christ at your office, they’ll say, “Here he goes; he’s gonna preach to us—don’t get preachy with me.” Preaching is what we’re all called to do. I know there’s a stigma to it today, and it may have that stigma because you picture some guy in a sandwich



board that says “The end is near—prepare—turn or burn.” Now, you may mock that, but that is a crass way to summarize what we’re here to do. And is Christ not coming? Isn’t the end just as the Bible says? Isn’t the Judge standing at the door? He could kick it open at any time and establish his kingdom, and the time would be up; the buzzer would sound, and “the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.” That’s going to happen. And your job and mine, as emissaries of the King—as heralds of the King—is to get people ready for the coming of the Messiah.

And again, I don’t want to over-spiritualize it, but that’s what you and I are doing. That fits the paradigm of how you and I live—representatives of the King, getting people ready for the coming of the King. And much like Samaria, it’s not a very friendly place for that. We want inclusiveness; we’d like every religion to kind of stand on its own because in our day, of course, the cardinal sin of society is “don’t hurt anybody’s feelings.” And for you to say, “Christ is the King—okay—but the King of kings? Lord of lords? No. Every other way is wrong, and this one’s right?” Well, yeah, that’s what he said: “Way, truth, life—no one.” Yet we don’t like that. And yet that’s the message: “No other name given among men by which we must be saved.” That’s our message. You can say it nicely, kindly; you can raise the pitch of your voice—however you want—that’s a message that’s going to offend people. And it does.

And if you are faithful to be that messenger—to try and get your family, your extended family, your neighbors, your co-workers, your friends, your colleagues ready for the coming of the King—you’d better be ready for rejection. This is going to happen—number one on your outlines—just put it down that way: be ready for rejection. The only way to avoid rejection is to avoid your responsibility as a messenger. That’s the only way to avoid it.

And—scratch that—you know what—even if you were silent about the message of the gospel—I take that back because of this verse, 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 4. It says that even if you said nothing about the gospel and the need for your co-workers to embrace Christ, your lifestyle, if it’s lived in a godly manner, will be a rebuke enough for them to malign you and exclude you. It says this: they’ll wonder; they’ll be like, “I can’t—I don’t understand why you won’t do this with us. I don’t understand why you won’t go along with what everyone does in our company or in our sales team. I don’t understand why you don’t come to this party with us, or do this with us, or do these things.” And they will be surprised you don’t run into the same excess of dissipation, and they will malign you—even if you never open your mouth about the gospel, which, of course, you should.

So let me revise my statement: the only way to avoid rejection in this world is for you not only to not speak up for Christ, but not even to live for Christ. And by that I mean your life doesn’t reflect his holy standards. So if you fit in with everybody else and you conform to the world, well, then I suppose you



could avoid it. But if you live for Christ, you're not really able to avoid it. He made that very, very clear.

With that said—and we don't need to belabor that, because that's been so frequent in the Gospel of Luke; we should know that by now—but I do want to warn you that if you embrace that truth in a certain way, it will lead you to all kinds of other problems. If you say, "I know living for Christ and speaking for Christ is going to make me some weirdo, and I'm going to be excluded, and I'll be the Jesus freak—then you know what, I'm going to be the freakiest Jesus freak around. If the message of the gospel is going to offend people, man, I'm going to make sure it offends people." And you've met people like that, haven't you?

Oh yeah. I had a heart for the campus of the University of Arizona in Tucson. I spent three years there as a college pastor. I prayed for that campus. I love those students. I sought to win them to Christ and draw them to repentance and proclaim the message of a righteous God and a holy standard and a need for trust in Christ. And I just was all about that every day. And often I would go out into the campus, strike up conversations with people, and just share the message of the gospel.

Unfortunately, sometimes I had to contend with another guy that would be there in the middle of the mall at the University of Arizona with a megaphone and a huge sign. As he sat there and yelled at everybody. And the things that he yelled at people were true. They were true. Now, he used colorful language to describe the sin problem of the people on the campus, but I could agree—you're right. Just like the Apostle Paul saying to an insider, Titus, you know, in Crete: "They are lazy gluttons, they're evil brutes." That's true. "And you need to rebuke them so that they can be sound. You need to address that sin." And you're right.

The question is, how do you do it? Now, the guys that I used to see—and these are a caricature of the kind of person you may work with who claims Christ, but he really tries to, with incendiary language, always irk someone—now, they're right that they are excluded because of Christ. The problem is, it's not the message—really. I mean, before they even get to understanding what they're saying, it's the way in which they present the truth. I'm not asking you to be rude. As a matter of fact, here's some words the Bible constantly uses: gentleness and respect. Gentleness and respect. Gentleness and respect.

Colossians chapter 4—Paul says, "You ought to pray that God would open a door so that I can share the gospel. Now I'm being persecuted for it; I'm in prison for it. But you need to pray." And then, "I



want you guys to be very careful so that your speech is always seasoned, as it were, with salt. I want you to be able to answer people so that you can have an intelligent, reasonable, acceptable answer to the things that they say.” No, that’s not what’s happening when they’re yelling out names at people with banners with flames on it and megaphones. And I’m thinking, you know, we’re trying to say the same thing. The problem is you’re reveling in the exclusion, and therefore you’re causing problems that God never intended us to cause. This is not gentleness; this is not respect; this is the no-way-seasoned-with-salt diplomacy.

Now, that probably is not anybody in this room saying, “Well, what do I do with the banners in the trunk of my car and the megaphone?” That’s not you—I get that. But if you start to experience—because you grow a biblical, godly backbone to start speaking for Christ—and you get rejected, and you go to these passages for comfort, you could then start not being so careful about gentleness and respect. And I’m saying—paramount importance—be respectful. Be gentle. Be intelligent. Let your conversation be seasoned with salt, as Colossians 4 says.

One more thing that can happen if you’re not careful with this point: you’re ready for rejection?—is that you’ll always expect it. What? Yeah—there’s a difference between always expecting rejection and being ready for rejection. Would you agree with that? And there are people in this room that have experienced rejection because of their Christianity, and now they don’t—it’s not that they’re ready for it, it’s that they’re always expecting it. And when you always expect it, you become this cynical, negative, pessimistic Christian, that every time you see a non-Christian, you know what they think. You don’t know what they think. “I know they’re going to reject this.” You don’t know they’re going to reject this.

Matter of fact, let me quote again the same passage I was quoting from Colossians 4. Paul starts that with a prayer: “Would you pray for us that God would open a door for the word?” And then he says, “You guys—I want your speech seasoned with salt; be ready to answer everybody; get out there and act wise toward outsiders.” Now, why all of that? Well, because he was a biblical optimist—a biblical optimist. And think about how important that is, even when you know the odds are against you.

What are the odds that someone’s going to get up to the plate in baseball season at Angel Stadium and hit the ball over the fence? The odds are low—the odds are low. Even the guys that do it more than other guys, the odds are low. The percentage, even to get a base hit, are low. Is it 50/50? No. If it’s 50/50, you are the best baseball player in all of Major League Baseball. It’s less than that. But if you said, “I’m training a hitter who’s going to be a great addition to the lineup for the Angels this year,” and you know what—he’s always expecting not to get a hit; he’s always expecting not to get a home run. “You need to be ready that oftentimes you’ll go, you’ll stand in that chalk rectangle, and you will



walk back to the dugout without getting on base. That's going to happen a lot. You need to be ready for that." I don't want you to always expect it, though. As a matter of fact, I want that biblical optimism the Apostle Paul had, who—though he was ready for rejection—he was always praying for an open door. "I hope this guy responds well."

How often is our life an offense to people just by the way we live? And how often is our message rebuffed and snubbed because of what it's all about? Often. But sometimes it's not. Remember that great line there in John 15 where Jesus says, "A servant's not above his master; a student not above his teacher. If they hated me, they'll hate you." It didn't end there, though. He said, "If they obeyed my word, they'll obey yours." What's that mean? Sometimes you hit; sometimes you hit it over the fence. And sometimes, if what I said was well received and transformed lives, sometimes what you say is going to hit and transform lives. You need to be ready for that. Be ready for rejection, but also be ready for acceptance. Be ready for rejection, but also be ready for someone to look at your life and say, "You know what—there's something salty about that, something enlightening about that," and even the way you lived your life drew me to ask you some questions about who you are, what you believe. I have a biblical optimism.

Do not let this point—to be ready for rejection—lead you either to enjoying rejection and therefore inciting it. And don't let it lead you to be a cynic that thinks that every non-Christian you meet is going to hate you and your Christ. Not true. But be ready, because it will be a reality. Being Christian and allied with Christ does not exempt you from rejection. And as verses 54 and 55 remind us, it's gonna really hurt. It's going to create some visceral response. You're going to want to retaliate. It's going to be what you want.

"When his disciples James and John saw it" (verse 54), "they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them." The answer is no. Put this down, if you would—no matter how you feel when you're snubbed, always—number two—refuse to retaliate. Always refuse to retaliate. When someone excludes you, then it's not your job now to exclude them. Oh, that sounds so junior high. Listen, it's happening all the time in office buildings and neighborhoods all throughout Orange County—all the time. It's sometimes done so automatically because it is a visceral—another way to say a fleshly—response. You don't even think about it. The guy that snubs you or doesn't like you or even mocks you because of your Christianity is standing in the workroom at the coffee machine and can't figure it out, and you know how to use it, and you see him, and his back is turned, and you walk by and smile. He's snubbed and excluded you, and you're going to do the same to him. Well, it's a long way from calling fire out of heaven. Is it, though?



Let's think this through. In chapter 9 we learned about the transfiguration. Jesus shows up with two important figures. Who are they? Moses and Elijah. Elijah—if you really know your Old Testament—you know at one point in Elijah's ministry, in Samaria, he called down fire from heaven to consume his adversaries—2 Kings chapter 1, if you want to look it up later this afternoon. Remember his arch-enemy Jezebel and Ahab? They're dead and off the scene. Ahaziah comes in—comes into power. And Elijah is still doing his thing—representing the truth of God—with even more resolve and vigor. And Ahaziah—I don't know—trips somehow off the upper, you know, balcony of his palace and ends up in ICU. He's in pain. So he calls his messengers together and says, "Man, I need some help. I'm in bad shape. I need supernatural help. You know what—go and call for Baal-zebub—the god of our foreign neighbors. Maybe he can help me."

Messengers go out—guess who they run into? Elijah. Elijah, a lot like John the Baptist, wearing very funky clothes, which reminds us he didn't care what people think. They run into the messenger—he runs into the messenger. "What are you doing?" "Well, we're going to call on Baal-zebub because the boss is sick." "Really? Is it that there's no God in Israel that you have to go calling on the neighbors' pagan temples to figure this out?" It's Mike Fabarez paraphrase, but that's the gist of it. So he says, "Go back—tell the king."

Well, they go back. They listen to the prophet, the man of God. "Tell the king—hey, you know what—we didn't do it because we ran into the man of God." "Well, who—what was he dressed like?" "Oh, I know that guy. You know what—go back and get him." Now, we don't have all the details of what's going on there in 2 Kings 1. But you know this is some nefarious plan to do something bad to Elijah. Well, they show up—now with the king's orders. "Now we're gonna go consult Satan, basically, to heal our boss." "You're in trouble with the boss." And you know what—"you know, man of God." He's the will of—"I'm no man of God that I could never call fire out of heaven to consume anybody—then could I?" And they die—the defiant messengers of a rebellious, apostate king trying to call on Satan to fix his health problem.

Where did it happen? Right here in Samaria—somewhere between "L.A. and Chicago," between Galilee and Jerusalem—right where they're trying to get a room and they can't get a room. See, this was something they thought, "Well, maybe—I mean, you're greater than Elijah. We got you flanked by Elijah, we saw Elijah and Moses—you're greater than him. They're rejecting not just a man of God like Elijah—they're rejecting the King of kings, the Messiah. I think, man, it would be a small thing, wouldn't it? Just to do what Elijah did right here in the same country. Should we do that? Maybe that's a question—I mean, it's just a proposal on the agenda tonight—or should we maybe do that?" He turns to them—just love the language—just a picture of squaring up James and John. "Hey, Sons of Thunder—no thunder tonight. No." "I rebuke you."



We want to retaliate. You may not call fire out of heaven. You may not pray some imprecatory psalm to “teach” your enemies. But you do want to get back at them, and so do I—I can’t deny that. People that snub me, reject me, malign me, ridicule me—and they might—it’s hard for me to think about that. I had some new news on Friday night—people that, for just a very simple, godly sermon—and I’m telling you, I know I preach them; some of you heard the baptism—I preach some harsh sermons, I get that. This was the nicest one I think I’ve ever preached. And to have these people malign me out there—“What a terrible person I am; don’t ever go to...” It happened twice to me in two days.

And rejection—robots—I’m not telling anyone to snub Mike Fabarez. I gotta tell you, if I see them with a flat tire on the side of the road this afternoon—really hard for me to think about stopping. I’m going to talk about, “I got no time to—I can’t do it. I’m busy. I got to feed the Lord’s servant here. I’ve no time to stop.”

And the Bible is so clear. When it comes to retaliation, we have no right to. Matter of fact, it goes even further than that. One passage on this—Romans 12—would you look at this? More than just restraining my visceral, fleshly reaction to want to pass by the guy who mocked me because of my Christianity—who can’t figure out the copy machine—and I’m going to snub him because he snubbed me; I got a party—he doesn’t ever invite me to—“I’m not going to have him at my thing. She says bad things about me because I’m a Jesus freak—I’m gonna say some bad things.” Far beyond you just restraining that reaction—verse 17 says, you got to think about what people are seeing. “Repay no one evil for evil.” I got that. “But give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of everyone.” Let’s say in your workplace, if all the people that mocked you, maligned you, rolled their eyes at you because of your Christianity—you just responded in kind—everyone’s watching. Christian, he says, think about it. You got eyeballs on you—watching you. Make sure you’re responding in an honorable way.

“If possible”—listen—try to make peace. “As far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves.” And I’m thinking about injustice in the universe—the equilibrium of the universe is messed up. No, no—everything—all the scores—are going to be set. “Leave it to the wrath of God.” Now, the problem is I got wrath right now in my heart—I get indignation in my heart. He says, listen, God’s got it. And it’s not impulsive, and it’s not reactive. Yours is impulsive—and you just stop. You don’t worry about revenge; you don’t worry about returning. You let God, in his anger, deal with this because his is measured, proper, holy, and right. It is written—and one day will happen—“Vengeance is mine.” He quotes the Old Testament. “I will repay,” says the Lord.

Matter of fact, I wish it stopped there, but it doesn’t. “To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. By doing so you will heap burning coals on his head.” Before we get to the weirdness of burning coals, just think about what he’s saying here. And if



you're in Samaria, it wouldn't take much for Jesus to say, "You know what—you're trying to be like Elijah in this case. Now, there were special reasons for that, and we can discuss why that may have been appropriate for Elijah. But his successor, Elisha, had an instance here in Samaria just like the one you're talking about." And that came when the successor of Elijah—the prophet Elisha—had the Syrians attacking and kidnapping Israelites. And the Syrian messengers came, and the sidekick—the assistant—of Elisha says, "Should we kill them?" And Elisha says, "No. As a matter of fact, bring the messengers in here. Sit them down. Let's feed them." He feeds them and sends them back with full bellies—burping and walking down the road—being nicely fed by the prophet. And the last verse in that scene says, the Syrians no longer bothered them. No—no more—no more enemies of Israel, at least for a time. He placated and, by his kindness, he overcame evil with good, and it was because he fed them.

But that's embedded in the Law of the Old Testament when it said at the very beginning—they're coming out of Egypt, as we're reading about in our DBR—and they're in the desert, and God gives the law, because now we're not in the jurisprudence of Egypt—now you need a law code. And the law code said this: if you have an enemy—I don't care what the reason is here—and his ox gets out and he's wandering around, you take his ox and you lead him back home, and you do him a favor. If your enemy's hungry, feed him; if his ox is wandering, bring him back. If he needs something to drink, give him something. "For by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head."

Now, you got a few choices with this metaphor. It's not at all clear. I can't tell you it's clear. I mean, I have an opinion on it. A very smart guy—smarter than me—Augustine—said, "Well, you know what this means? That when someone receives good after he's done bad to you, he will burn in his mind with shame. He'll be embarrassed and ashamed." Maybe—perhaps. If you read a modern commentary on this, they've done a lot more background on the original quote, which comes from Proverbs 25, where they say, "Well, you know, if we look at the Old Testament culture, their neighbors—the Egyptians—had a very specific ritual for someone who was doing wrong and recanted and repented and said, 'I'm done with all that'—say, with some husband that was, you know, a philanderer, and now he's gonna be faithful to his wife. He would go to the priest in Egypt, and he would put burning coals on his head and walk across the temple floor." Weird. Well, that's what they've discovered, and they said, well, maybe that—Israel's neighbor in the 10th century BC—maybe that's what they were talking about. He'll repent; he'll turn back. And that's certainly what happened when Elisha gave food to the Syrian rebels—that worked. They repented.

Well, the problem I have, though—both of those may be true—is if you look for the analogy—the symbol—of burning coals on someone's head throughout the Old Testament, it's usually a sign of God's judgment. And the immediate context even says, "Listen, God is going to take vengeance. You need to stand back and just continue to do good and what's honorable in the sight of everyone. Just let God deal with it." Now, I'd like evil to end—which is the last verse of this passage: "Do not be



overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” I want evil to stop. Evil is either going to stop when God judges them and it’s over, or—maybe by your honorable behavior—they see your good deeds, and they maybe feel ashamed, back off; maybe they come to full-blown repentance. Or maybe they’re always going to be a pain in your side, and God will have to deal with them in the next life. Either way, I want to overcome evil with good, and that means I gotta be focused on good.

And just to put one passage in this—if you jot down the reference—I Peter, chapter 4, verse 19: “Hey, if you’re suffering and you know you’re doing the right thing—you’re allied with Christ—here’s the deal: entrust your soul to a faithful Creator and continue to do good.” Just entrust your soul—“God, you’ll take care of me. I’ve been wronged—this is not right. I’ve been mocked—this is not right. I’ve been excluded. I’ve been passed over by the promotion. I was fired from this job—it was not right. But I’ll entrust my soul to you. You’ll take care of it. You’re a faithful Creator. And I’ll just continue to do good.”

Your option is what? To stoop to the same kind of mudslinging that they’re doing. Just jot one more reference down—how about this one: Romans, chapter 3, in the beginning of the book, verse 14. He describes the problem with sin in this world, and he describes in specific detail the problem that takes place in the heart and mouth of people, and he says this: “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” The last thing God wants you to do is—when people get nasty and mean and start calling you names or gossiping behind your back—he doesn’t want you engaged in the same things. Cursing?—we certainly don’t want your heart filled with bitterness. Let it go—let it go. Sounds like a Disney song. Every time I say that now I feel like I can’t even use that phrase anymore. It’s a good phrase, though. I don’t want the bitterness in my heart. Let it go. Say, “No—God, I’m going to entrust my account and my life to you and continue to do good.” Always refuse to retaliate.

Certainly they may have been justified in thinking God’s vengeance is required and due here, but God says—the incarnate God now—rebuke. No, this is not the case.

Now it seems like we’re done with the passage, but there’s one more: “And they went on to another village.” You might say, duh—if you preach anything from that, you’re really stretching the text. Am I? Wait a minute—what are the options here? The disciples—at least James and John—they got an option: torch them. Jesus says no. Now he’s got an option as well. He could say, “Which village was it? Let’s go there.” “I don’t want to call fire from heaven.” “No, I’d like to sit down and ask them what their reasons were. I’d like to talk to them. I’d like to persuade—let me do another round with these guys. If they’ve rejected the Messiah, I just want to know what their—I’m going to go at it a little bit.” He doesn’t.



Matter of fact, this simple, small sentence is so—it typifies so much of what Christ said. It’s almost surprising how often he said it. Look up verse 5 in the same chapter: “Wherever they don’t receive you”—it’s already assumed because he’s told them—“then just move on. And when you leave the town, just shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” Or maybe more clearly, Matthew chapter 10, verse 23: “Hey, when they persecute you in one town, just flee to another town.” Don’t sit there and continue this. When you’ve run into persecution, when you’ve run into exclusion, don’t do it. Matter of fact, let’s go to another village, because there is another village out there who’s probably going to at some point open up their boarding homes; they’re going to have a meal that we’ll pay for; we’re going to sit around and talk to those people. It may be in another town just like the one that rejected you, but we’re going to move to that town.

That principle of saying, “Listen, if they’ve rejected me, moving on,” it’s all over the place. It’s so profound and so frequent, I think we don’t give it its serious due in Scripture. Let’s call it this—number three: there are times—and you know when those times are—to realign your relationships. Just realign them. That job’s gonna continue to snub you? Maybe it’s time for you not to work there anymore. This circle—these people—they’re going to continue—well, maybe that’s not part of what you should be a part of. Wow, that just sounds so...

I’ll go so far as to say this—even in something as sacred and profound as the marriage covenant. Now, this can be an abused statement, so don’t abuse the statement. God is pro-marriage and pro-marriage covenant. But in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 15, he says, “If the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.” Let them go. “In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.” And we bang our heads against the wall sometimes with people that say, “I don’t like you; I don’t like your God.” “Oh no, no—you have to—let’s keep talking.” No, no—sometimes it’s not gonna work. Sometimes you need to stop wasting your words.

And if you want to put it in profound statements that are so seemingly dramatic—I mean, they almost seem like, “This can’t possibly be the words of Christ.” Matthew 7, verse 6—you know the verses: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs, and do not cast your pearls before swine.” Now, I know, you know, pigs become really cute, and some people have them as pets. But remember the context here—these Jewish people—there’s nothing more detestable than the unclean pig. And you’re telling me that there’s a time I don’t take my pearls—what? Yeah, absolutely. “Don’t you want the pigs to become, you know, reborn into beautiful people?” I get that—yeah, that’s what we want. But he’s got two reasons for that. Here’s the rest of that verse: “lest they trample them underfoot.” At some point, you need to know that what I’m giving and what I’m doing is now being mocked and maligned, and this is not the guy to listen to; this is a time to stop talking. And then the second thing is, “and they will turn and attack you.” God does not want us to be in constant attack. He’d like us to be in peace. He’d like us



to find a village—if you will—where the people around are at least willing to listen. He’d like us to have ears that hear. He’d like us to have receptive hearts. And sometimes when the door seems open and we continue to try to walk through it, and we hit seemingly this invisible barrier that says, “No, no, no,” you gotta say, “Okay, I get it—it’s time maybe to realign my relationships.”

We get two Proverbs on this—just jot them down; you don’t need to turn there. Proverbs 9:7–8—I’ll count that as one, brother. “Whoever corrects a scoffer gets abuse for himself; whoever reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer; he will hate you. Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” See, the goal isn’t—like a lot of Christians—just to stop reproving people. No, we call people to repentance—absolutely. The point is that sometimes you gotta look for situations where they are willing to hear it.

If there’s any group that does not jam their religion down people’s throats, it should be biblical Christians. We’re not taking up arms against the infidels—that is not how this works. And when it comes to people that reject Christ, the Bible says, “It’s a big world with a lot of relationships—get out there and find one that will embrace it.”

“Jesus—oh, that sounds uncaring and unloving. Jesus would never do that.” He did it. Think about the rich young ruler. It says in the context that Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and loved him. And when he walked away, did he chase after him? No—let him go. He turned to his disciples and started talking about the rewards that come for those that are willing to not idolize their stuff. Judas in the upper room—think about this—over three years of investment in this guy. He’s now going to go and walk through the door and make a deal to betray Christ for 30 pieces of silver. Think about this. Now, as he turns and you’re there in the upper room, and he’s about to walk through that threshold, what are you going to do, Jesus? Chase him down? To the contrary—remember what he said? “What you do, do quickly.”

I just think there’s something about the fact that some of us in this room continue to bang our head against the proverbial wall with people that we think would make perfect converts to Christ. And there are a lot of people that would much rather have lunch with us this week and talk about our Christianity, but we’re too busy investing our relationship somewhere else. Know when it’s time to realign your relationships.

I said there would be two Proverbs—here’s the second one. Proverbs 23:9—“Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.” There’s a time for us to stop



instructing. There's a time for us to stop correcting. There's a time for us to stop teaching. It's when I don't have a willing participant in the conversation.

Know when it's time—even on a bigger scale. Sometimes it's time for me to realign. Sometimes it's time to hit that button—"unfriend." Ooh, how apparent is that? "Jesus would never do..." Yeah—really. Do we understand the Scripture here? Or is it "de-friend, unfriend, no longer a friend, ex-friend"—don't get me started. Know when to realign—realign relationships.

This is the end of our ten-part series that I tried to put a banner on as I carefully, prayerfully looked through all these pericopes—these scenes—in Luke 9. I tried to see what could tie these together in terms of thematic preaching. And I thought, well, in every case, God's given us some kind of guidance, some kind of wisdom, some kind of solution to the problem. So we called it—Christ's perfect provision. Now, when I look at this text, I see we have a provision here, and that is: you're gonna have to live with some visceral reactions in your own heart, and you're gonna have to entrust yourself to God, and you're gonna have to move on sometimes. I get all that. And I have to expect the fact that sometimes, as messengers of Christ going to people that need to be ready for the coming of the King, I'm going to be rejected—we got all that.

But if you were to ask me, sitting in my office: "Hey, Pastor Mike, when you're rejected—or when I'm rejected—what's the greatest provision of Christ in all of that?" These are good things, and I'm all for them, and I just spent an hour preaching them. But when I think about the thing that helps me through the difficulty of rejection, exclusion, and being snubbed—it's the thing that David said in Psalm 27. He said—though, and I'm quoting—I saw people writing in 2017, "Though my father and mother"—here it comes—"have forsaken me, the Lord will take me up." The ultimate provision I have in my own heart is that when these kinds of—and frankly, they're turbulent—horizontal relationships with people on the planet—when I know that some people that call me friend will later be a betrayer; when some people that are receptive are then going to become enemies—here's the bottom line: I take great comfort in the provision that Christ has said to me, "I will never leave you and I will never forsake you." That though all others may turn aside, you know what—"I'm in your life. There's no fear what man can do to you—I'm with you. I'm your helper." Something so helpful in thinking that through.

Now, I heard stories—I do every week. I can't imagine—I'm such a likable guy—but people saying, "Didn't like you. Didn't like you—never go to your church." I get all that. I get that. But when that ramps up, you know—take it to a level that's just dramatic. Let's just say every single person in this room—you all leave; you never come back; you walk out to the patio—won't even eat the donuts I'm offering for you—and you say, "I'm starting blogs just to dismantle that guy; I hate him." And then while you're out there, you know, trying to malign me, my wife calls and says, "You know what—after



all, I don't like you either, man. I'm out of here." And then my parents call and say, "You know, we never liked you either, and so we're never talking to you again." Now, that's a bad week, because I'm back here next week preaching to no one.

The Bible says even if your mother and father forsake you, the Lord has promised something that gives me a great assurance. And, by the way, it's a Christ that knows what it is to feel the pain of being snubbed and rejected. You know, one of the most poignant prophecies of Christ—hundreds of years before he came—was this—Isaiah 53:3—"He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Now you know those phrases. But here's the next one we don't often quote that really has settled into my heart from the beginning of my ministry and brings me great comfort, because I realize the Christ that promised to never leave me is a Christ that was described this way in prophetic Scripture: "as one from whom men hide their faces; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Think that through. There are people in my life right now—if I see them at the Spectrum—they will literally turn the other way so they do not see me: "Here comes the Bible-thumper." And you've had that experience too. You have people who do not want to be stuck sitting at the table with you, or whatever it might be—partnered with you on that sales call—whatever the situation. If you know that pain, know this: Christ knew it in such large measure. People said, "Here he comes," as one that people would—as the men would—hide their faces from him. That's the way he was despised. And people didn't esteem him.

Christ knows if you're hurting. And I know we can talk about, you know, people excluding you from some staff party—that's one thing. Somebody may be going through a divorce right now where a spouse is dumping you because you're a Christian. I don't know—how profound—a business partner that's saying, "I'm out of here—you won't break the rules; you won't bend the rules; you won't party with us." Whatever it is—if you're rejected, and it's profound and affecting your life—you've got a Christ that knows that pain. Judas was walking through the door, saying, "I'm done; I'm cashing this in for 30 pieces of silver."

But if you ask me, what's the ultimate provision? I'd say, well, relationship with Christ. But I can't help but—hopefully you know this from my preaching—not recognize that all the pain I feel now is all temporary. You want to know Christ's ultimate provision for you? Is it—this experience of walking into a town and having people reject you because of Christ—never going to happen in the kingdom. There's a day coming when Christ's perfect provision is—you will never feel rejection; you will never be snubbed; you will never be excluded. Think about that. You'll be embraced in a community of people that live righteously. It's called a place where righteousness dwells. And no one's going to look at you and say, "Because you love God, because you live for God, I don't want to have lunch with you." Never going to happen.



Until then, though—control your emotions; never retaliate; know what’s coming; and sometimes, with wisdom and maybe some counsel and insight, you need to make the decision to realign a few relationships in your life.

Would you stand with me? Let’s dismiss you and wrap up this ten-part series with a word of prayer.

Pray with me, please.

God, it’s hard for us to contemplate for so many minutes on end something so unpleasant. All of us have experienced it—can joke about being dumped by a potential date. There are people here who’ve had their parents walk out on them as kids. There are people here that have had their spouse turn and walk out; had folks in businesses where every business partner has turned on them; betrayal; passed over for things that they’re justly due, but they don’t get it because they stand with you. And God, we know that’s a feeling that—as we pray through the mediation of Christ—certainly Christ, you know that pain in such large measure. That’s something you experienced every day; I’ve got to think—every day. And so, God, we know we have the empathy—the sympathetic High Priest who knows our pain.

And God, what we want to do is to stay faithful in turning our soul and our heart and our problem and the injustice and inequities that we feel to you—entrusting our soul to a faithful Creator—and then just continue to do good. And that’s easier said than done. So empower us, please, God. Give us strength; give us fortitude; give us that resolve to, in that situation, not retaliate—to bite our lip and say we’re not going to return insult for insult; we’re not going to repay evil for evil.

God, in some situations it’s appropriate and right—and we see examples of it throughout the Bible—where it’s time maybe to just realign my investment of relationship here. That’s painful, because sometimes we have romantic ideas about friendships or circles or situations or groups that we’re in—thinking they’re going to last forever. And in this world with sin and problems and compromise—sometimes they just can’t if we’re going to live righteous lives. So, God, help us to have that wisdom and discernment we need.

And, God, even with such a negative topic, I pray this morning we can leave just with that hopeful, biblical optimism—that when some doors are slammed shut, there are many others that open up, and relationships that become so gratifying—of people that not only are willing to love our God and be



zealous for his word, but love us as well—faithful friends. So thank you for that, God. And we do pray that you would encourage us to remember that where we’re heading is a place where we won’t feel these feelings anymore—there’ll be no more rejection. We look forward to that. God, bring it quickly—as the early church said that little Aramaic phrase—Maranatha—come quickly, Lord Jesus. We pray that in his name, amen.