

Luke 10

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 April 2013 14:46

As we come closer to the death of Christ we see a very real urgency in His ministry. He doubles up on the work, using the apostles, and then the seventy disciples. His words also become urgent. In reality EVERY moment of this earth should be urgent for Christians. We might live longer on this earth than Jesus did, but the tasks we have are none the less urgent.

We now face abominations attacking the very laws of God, and His people. More enemies are gathering over the horizon. Time is very short, and His Second Coming soon. Let our lives be a beacon to the dying world!

Verses 1&2

1.

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2.

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Jesus, with time running short, now appointed another seventy disciples. It seems their main objective was to preach, though they also had a warrant to perform miracles, as did the apostles. The same seventy were constantly with Jesus.

They were sent out two-by-two, to visit as many places as possible. Note that they were to speak to people in places Jesus was to visit later, preparing His path. At all times we must prepare for Jesus, not for ourselves. So many campaigns and meetings are held in the name of a group or minister, but this is not the way to do God's work. None of us has any merit. Only Christ has merit, and this is why we must do everything in His name. It is a fact that over the years I have been more and more reticent to have a public face... Christ is the Face, not mine.

What harvest was Jesus referring to in verse 2? This verse is used in every age, but is it a

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proper use of the text? No, it is not. Jesus was talking to the seventy men He was sending out; the harvest that was ripe was that of His own day. The labourers were few simply because the Gospel was itself very new, and Jesus had not yet sent out many to deal with it. He sent the twelve, and now He was sending seventy more. This was because His time was coming to an end, and He wanted the chosen people, the Jews, to hear the good news of God's kingdom.

Surely, the harvest is ripe today? Of course it is! If the seed is planted, it is followed by an harvest! But, the harvest is not always the same... there are big and small harvests, depending solely on how many men and women God has called in each particular generation. However, the coming of Christ 2000 years ago was for a particular time. It was, if you wish, the optimum time in the history of the world for Jesus to arrive. Therefore, the harvest in His day was of stupendous importance, even moreso than at any other time in history. It had to be... God does not choose at random!

So, the main point to bear in mind is that Jesus was referring to the harvest in His own day. He was not referring to harvests at any other time. That the world has experienced harvests ever since is not the point... what I am showing you is that we must interpret scripture accurately, and not make a specific incident or teaching meant for one era to fit every other era. Thus, the fact that we have had many other harvests, and will continue to do so, is something separate.

Verses 3-7

1.

Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

2.

Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

3.

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

4.

And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

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5.

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

Jesus warned the seventy that they would be in danger, like innocent lambs moving amongst wolves. What this proves is that the time of Jesus was not the wondrously ecstatic time so many modern preachers make it out to be. The time Jesus preached in was very dangerous to life itself. The seventy, like their Master, were telling Jews that the time of Judaism was now almost over, because the Messiah had come! The reaction would be either acceptance or denial, and denial brought with it violence and hatred.

Today, Christians are urged to go out and tell others of Christ. This is admirable. But, it is also only a partial requirement. What is missing is the hard fact that to preach and teach and tell others of Christ is to open up to possible wicked attacks. It is easy to speak to fellow believers in the comfort of a church or home. It is very different to speak to those who hate us... including fellow believers who loathe any words that challenge their own pet beliefs! It is true to say that for 90% of my time preaching and teaching, I have known immense hatred for the past four and a half decades. And a great deal of it has come from those who are my brethren!

You might think this is not appropriate, but Jesus was talking about the seventy going *amongst their own kind, the Jews*

! The hatred and danger they were to know, came mainly from the Jews, not from the Romans (who were mainly indifferent, so long as the nation was passive). Do not be surprised, then, if brethren attack you or treat you badly. Frankly, for several decades I expected nothing *but*

bad treatment from fellow believers... and that is a sad reflection on our modern churches. Only recently have I come across genuine believers who do not attack and do not arrogantly dismiss me. Jesus, then, was accurate in His warning.

The seventy went out with a similar command that was given to the twelve; they were to go immediately, without money, or bag of necessary items, nor shoes (but only sandals they already wore). Interestingly they were not to greet anyone on the way to each place.

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This command, not to 'salute' or greet people on the way, might seem odd. But, it is to be understood in its historical context. It is this – saluting people one meets, could take some time as mutual niceties were observed. This was normal social interaction at the time. But, as Jesus knew, His days on earth were coming to an end and the seventy had no time to spend on mere niceties. They literally had to set their face onwards, not stopping, until they reached a village or town to prepare for Jesus. As a commentator of that time says, saluting people on the way could drastically elongate time taken from one place to another. Avoiding the usual niceties would have seemed rude, but it was necessary to keep momentum going for Jesus.

Today, most Christians try to observe social niceties, even when there is nothing to be nice about! Pastors, in particular, tend not to upset other pastors, by being 'balanced'. Jesus does not call us to this falsity! We must speak truth properly, gently or toughly, as the situation demands.... the simpering talk and 'wet-cloth' handshake should not be our hallmark!

During their travels the men were to say "Peace be to this house" when entering. If God was with the people in that house, then the preachers would know it and could stay. How? By God's Spirit agreeing with our spirit. Together, there is a testimony. Few believers today understand what this means, because their understanding is human and not of God. They know next to nothing of this vital, vibrant and ongoing testimony in the soul. If the household did not accept Christ, then the greeting would "turn to (them) again". This literally means the greeting would 'bend back' or return. That is, the greeting was negated by the bad spirit in the home, and so the preachers must leave.

Modern Christians think it is essential to keep trying, to continually speak with those who reject them and their message. This is not taught by Christ. If rejected we must walk away and not go back. In this way the peace of God does not enter the house or the persons in it. It cannot, because peace includes harmony and agreement.

If the peace of God is intact, the preachers were to eat and sleep in the house, taking whatever food and drink is offered. It does not mean they insisted on staying. It just means that people of like mind, accepting the words of Christ, would offer hospitality as a matter of honour. Hospitality was a top priority in any Jewish household, but hatred for the Gospel would prevent the Jews therein from offering it. If such hospitality was offered the men were to stay in that one place until they had to leave, rather than go from house to house.

Note that "the labourer is worthy of his hire". This means that the preacher/teacher, etc., is

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worthy of value and has a 'weight', *axios*, with God that should convey itself to the hearers. It means that those who do God's work (preaching, teaching, etc) should be assisted by God's people, so that they may live, eat, sleep, pay their way, and so on. Jesus used a term known amongst agricultural workers of His day – those who laboured in the fields were to be paid a proper wage for their work. It still surprises me that Christians leave much money to dogs and cats, or to mission fields, but not to men called by God to preach and teach, who need ongoing support.

Verses 8-16

1.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

2.

And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

3.

But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

4.

Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

5.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

6.

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

7.

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But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

8.

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

9.

He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

The same command given for entering and staying in a house is now applied to a whole city. If the city is welcoming, then the men could eat with good conscience whatever is given to them. They were to heal the sick and tell them of the coming kingdom of the Messiah, which was now very close.

Cities that did not welcome the bearers of good news were to be shunned – the men were to go into the streets and warn that the dust of the city's streets that was on their sandals would be wiped off. This was a commonplace shunning of people at that time. yet, the [people who were shunned were also told that in spite of their sinful response, God's Gospel was now very close, even to them.

When God's word comes to a people it is not always in peace or with good will. For those who reject it, the word becomes as a raging fire, ready to consume them, not just in this life but in eternity. Jesus gave His chilling warning – it would be better for the despised city of Sodom than for the city who rejects His word.

Chorazin and Bethsaida are mentioned especially as examples of this sinfulness towards the Gospel. Tyre and Sidon had been destroyed, but if they had heard the same Gospel, they would have repented and dressed in clothes of repentance – sackcloth and ashes. Capernaum, too, given [praise by men in this life, would be dashed to pieces in hell. Such is God's anger against those who reject Him.

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This is because hearing the preachers and teachers of God is like listening to God Himself. This must be if they speak what God has given to them. Therefore, when men despise the preacher, they are despising Christ, and thus they despise God Himself. Those believers who similarly despise preachers and teachers they do not prefer should be likewise warned! And preachers and teachers should bear in mind that to shun an unwilling people or place is a biblical demand of Christ. Do not be found under this curse from God, but welcome Christ in the figure of His called men. If those men are counted worthy by God, and they shake the dust off their feet against a people or place, then it is a condemnation by God Himself.

Verses 17-20

1.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

2.

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

3.

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

4.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Like the twelve, the seventy disciples returned bubbling with joy... "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name"! The same applies today, when they are cast out in *Jesus'* name. Unfortunately, many see demons where they are not, or they gloat about their 'power' to do so, when they have none.

When this happens demons challenge them and say they know Christ, but "We don't know who *you*

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are!" Never seek to challenge demons or to go out to find them, when you have no reason to do so! The wrong attitude or a soul that is unsaved, will become meat for demonic fury, if people seek them out.

When the seventy told Jesus of their exploits, He told them that He saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven. This speaks of a swift ejection from the Heavenly abode, and a bright shining. Satan was the highest of all arch angels and the most beautiful, who shone with the light of the sun. That he 'fell' does not necessarily mean he looked like a comet, for the fall was from spiritual perfection to earthly imperfection. He was thrown out of Heaven with many other angels who were his supporters, but their 'fall' was spiritual.

Because of his bright appearance, his departure was like lightning. In this way, Jesus assured the disciples that Satan no longer had power over them. The only way Satan or demons can have power over believers is if they hand over their holiness to them and fear their power; many Christians invite them into their lives by living sinfully. Beware, for Satan loves to bring down Christians as a priority.

But, in the name of Jesus there is no power struggle – Satan and demons MUST fall back. Now we come to another historical statement made by Jesus; here He was talking specifically to the disciples. Therefore, what He said does not necessarily apply to us today (although it does as a result of obedience). When Jesus told them they could tread on serpents and scorpions, and they would be safe from their poisonous bites/stings, He was NOT advising them to deliberately find animals to step on, just to prove their power! Yet, in the USA, there are 'Christians' (?) who deliberately provoke snakes and scorpions so they are bitten. Inevitably, most die.

Jesus was simply telling them that when they went out in the name of Jesus, He would protect them. He was NOT telling them He would protect them if they acted like fools! It is a fact that even we do not do what we ought, God can often protect us. This is because we are in His plan and will. But, He will look at our hearts. If we go out specifically to challenge Satan, and act inappropriately out of sheer pride, because we think we have personal power – do not expect His protection.

Our Christian life is not a game, where we play against superior forces for fun! Or, to show-off our feigned 'superiority' against Satan. When this happens, God may easily hand us over to Satan to be mauled, that we will regain a sense of truth and repent.

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The major phrase is “and over all the power of the enemy”. When we act in God’s will and trust Him; when we live holy lives and only say and do what He commands and prompts, then we are protected from the vilest of enemies. And God will protect us in many other ways against elements, animals, and other dangers. Their power, and the power of human enemies, cannot prevail against us, for we are envoys of the Lord.

Jesus underlines His warning, not to be arrogant in the face of Satan or other enemies: “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you.” This is because demons are made in superior fashion to us; they are indescribably strong and powerful, and can ruin us if we approach them with arrogance and a supposed power of our own. Satan is greater than even these beings, so to laugh in His face and to tell him we are greater, will infuriate him to the point of destroying us, which he can do if we are fools.

Even the archangel Michael did not face Satan in his own remarkable power! The ONLY way to defeat Satan and demons is to cast them out in the name of someone even greater – Jesus Christ. it is HIS power that deals with them, not our own... for we have none.

Therefore, we may not rejoice in our supposed power. Nor may we rejoice at all. Satan is a disgraced archangel, but he was created by God. None may rejoice at the fall of a created being (though we may rejoice that any harm is now stopped). Our only reason to rejoice is “because (our) names are written in Heaven”. Our joy is that God chose us to salvation, despite our sin. We are saved by His power and might. In this alone may we rejoice.

Verses 21-24

1.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

2.

All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

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3.

And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

4.

For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

In verse 20, 'rejoice' is the verb, *chairō*. In verse 21, Jesus "rejoiced", and a different word is used – the verb, *agalliao*. In verse 20 the word is used of men in response to seeing the power of God in what they did. In verse 21, the word is used of Jesus' response to THEIR response!

Chairō

can be used of men's emotions and is broader in application than the verb

agalliao,

though there can be a similarity at times. In verse 21 the word applies specifically and only to being exceedingly glad/joyful. This rejoicing by Christ, foretold in Psalm 16:9 and quoted in Acts 2:26, is a divine rejoicing, in this context.

Evidently, the disciples' reports prompted this joy in the Lord, as He contemplated their inward spiritual state. Jesus thanked the Father that the disciples had learned so much and understood spiritual things, which had been hidden from many who sought after them. The text shows us that the disciples were not by any means mature believers, but were 'babes'... a fact that underlines the truth that it is the Lord, and not us, Who brings about marvellous things.

If He can do this for those who are 'babes' (meaning untaught and unskilled, yet open to God's leading), then how much moreso for those who have known the Lord for years? It should be said, though, that being saved for fifty years does not necessarily equal maturity or knowledge. Very often today it means nothing more than salvation, with almost no spiritual knowledge and understanding. Yet, a young believer of one year may be a long way ahead of the 'plodding Christian' (who invariably believes that whatever *he* knows must be sound and superior)!

Call on the Lord for knowledge and understanding, and do not rely on your own intellect and

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understanding. The difference is astounding and stark. Jesus commended the Father for using such 'babes' instead of more mature men – but, in reality, who else was there? The apostles knew only a little more than the other serious disciples! And both groups had only been with Christ for about two and a half years! Babes indeed! Even so, the Father used these, and their activities were marvels to behold... because they had faith and followed Jesus implicitly.

How do you think God views YOUR life? Are you a child in Christ, always eager to learn, or a long-standing plodder, with almost no achievements to note and poor knowledge? If the latter, you are in spiritual danger and in need of a swift shock to 'get you going'! God will leave plodders to their own devices on this earth, because they have not bothered to listen to the Spirit for a long time, preferring indolence. Do not wait for the Lord to shock you out of your slumber – act now.

Jesus then said something that is a riddle to unbelievers. He said that only He knew Who the Father was, and only the Father knew Who Christ was. Only Christ can reveal Who the Father and Son are, to those elected to know. This is why it is fruitless to try and explain Christian things to an unbeliever. He does not have the capacity to understand, or the willingness to listen (except in order to be critical), unless the Spirit brings him to the new birth.

It is why Arminian preaching is a lost cause, for unless the hearer is elected in eternity, no amount of preaching or clever words will draw a man to God. And this is always done by drawing to Christ, for "all things are delivered" to Christ by the Father. 'All things' includes not just every action but everyone who is to be saved. We can come to God ONLY through Jesus Christ, and by no other means. ONLY Christ can show this to the elect.

Jesus then turned to His disciples (including the apostles), so that no-one else could hear, saying that they were extremely blessed because they saw what most men could not see. Even past prophets and kings, no matter how godly, did not see what they saw. They did not hear the Christ preach, nor see His miracles. Yet here were men who heard and saw AND practised the same by Jesus' power! Today, the gifts and miracles still occur, but not as in the days of Jesus and the disciples. Now, we see these things in small number, only as God desires.

Verses 25-28

1.

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

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2.

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

3.

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

4.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

After this a lawyer stood up (which tells us Jesus' listeners were sitting around Him) and "tempted Him". A lawyer, *nomikos*, was learned in Mosaic law, not Roman law, and so advised the scribes and Pharisees. He seems to have asked a worthy question. It was worthy as a question, but the *reason behind it* was unworthy – the man wanted to test Christ. Of course, one can test someone to find out the truth, or, to use the answer to scorn or to catch-out.

The lawyer asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life. Note the words used... "What shall I DO" and "inherit". We can see the early seed of Arminianism here: what can the *man* do to obtain salvation? The word

poie

o

means 'to provide a thing for ones' self'. Also note that he expected to receive salvation by right,

kleronomeo

, 'inherit'.

Jews expect to be accepted by God because of their birthright as chosen people. They could not understand how any Jew could be rejected by God, and now here was Jesus teaching that they must come to the Father through Himself! So, here was another legalistic Jew trying to gather information to kill Jesus for. He automatically assumed that he could inherit because of his national link, so wanted Jesus to trip Himself up with what was considered anti-God

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teaching.

As always, Jesus was a step ahead of His enemy, and directed the lawyer back to his own scriptures. 'What do you read about it in the law?' The lawyer was no doubt very confident, for he knew the law inside out: 'You will love the Lord God with every part of your being. And you must love your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus commended his answer – 'Yes, you are correct. If you believe and act it out, you will be saved.'

No, this does NOT mean there is an alternative way to Heaven! Jesus said: 'If you love me you will obey my commandments'. It is a proof that one is born again. And this is exactly what He was telling the lawyer, who should have known this anyway. Like so many Jews of the day he was not looking for the Messiah's teaching but for ways to trap Him. Many do this to Christians today! They have no interest in any answers... which is why we must learn to discern genuine queries from entrapments.

Verses 29-37

1.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

2.

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

3.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

4.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

5.

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But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

6.

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

7.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

8.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

9.

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The lawyer probably felt foolish at that point, for he tried then to 'justify' himself. In modern language, he wanted to 'rationalise' his reasons for asking the question; he wanted to appear righteous before Christ, though his heart was dark. To cover his true intent, he asked another question: "Who is my neighbour". Any lawyer knew the answer! His 'neighbour, *plesion*, was a friend, or someone he did not know; it is anyone at all. But, to Jews only fellow Hebrews were considered to be friends; everyone else was an enemy and godless.

In this text the word means "the one who is near". Thus, one who lived next door - a neighbour - was 'near'. In Jesus' day there were no individual farmhouses, for everyone lived in villages or towns. Everyone around the fields was a neighbour, no matter which village he lived in. They helped everyone who lived and worked in the general area. Thus 'everyone' was a neighbour. The lawyer knew all this, so this time Jesus used a different approach.

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He told a parable: a man travelled on the fairly short road from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way a band of thieves lay in wait and ambushed him. They took everything from him, even his clothing, and beat him senseless, leaving him for dead on the road, injured and bleeding.

A short while later, a priest walked by, saw the half-dead man, and quickly passed by on the other side of the road. Is this not how most people react when seeing an injured man in the street? Then, a Levite, one of the tribe with Temple tasks, walked by and similarly hurried away again. Is it possible they thought the thieves could be nearby, and wanted to escape the same fate? Maybe – but it does not mean dispel with compassion.

Then came a Samaritan. Remember that Samaritans were Jews, but considered to be sinners by stricter Jews, because they intermarried with pagans and heathen. We may infer that the injured man was an orthodox Jew, which makes the actions of the Samaritan all the more worthy. The Samaritan stopped and gave help. 'Compassion' is to be moved inwardly and deeply.

The Samaritan bandaged the man, after cleaning his wounds with oil and wine; he lifted the injured man onto his animal (donkey perhaps), took him to an inn, and told the inn-keeper to look after the man, paying him two pence (two silver denarius) and promising to pay any extra when he came next.

Jesus now had the lawyer trapped by his own deviousness. Jesus asked him, of the three passers-by, who was the 'neighbour'? The lawyer had to say, the one who stopped and gave help. That, said Jesus, is your answer – likewise go and help anyone who needs it, for he is your neighbour.

So, who is our neighbour today? How do we read this portion? Firstly, this is another historical text: Jesus is answering a specific person who asked Him a specific question. In itself this is as far as it goes – it is not a teaching as such, but a device used by Jesus to show a Jew his error. As a Jew he taught that a neighbour was any Jew who lived in a village or town surrounding the local fields. By extension, this includes any Jew in any place throughout Israel, but no-one else. Which is precisely why Jesus used the example of a helper hated by the Jews!

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Secondly, though this was a specific answer to a specific person, we may take from it *theological*

assumptions based on the scriptural statement. The first assumption is that everyone is our 'neighbour' and not just those of our own race or kind. But, a second assumption must be remembered – that we may not help those who hate God (2 Chronicles 19:2, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore [is] wrath upon thee from before the LORD." This is a severe warning about helping those who openly hate God and us).

This, in itself, is the subject of a separate study, so I will illustrate with a personal note: In my ministry, work, and in society as a whole, I have no preconceptions or preconditions regarding who is my neighbour, or who I can and cannot help. Every situation is different and I have never, to my knowledge, ever hated anyone, whether or not they hated me or harmed me. This is how I could squarely face my homosexual enemies and ask them "Have I ever done you harm? Have I ever talked against you? Indeed, have I not always helped you?" They had no option but to agree with me!

This may surprise those who do not fully know me, but do know I have been under horrendous attack from homosexuals. Though I knew of their evils I did not retaliate, nor did I do any harm or even speak ill of them. Instead, I did them good, and was friendly to all. I knew that God was heaping coals of fire upon their heads, condemnation for their continuing evils against me. Yet, I never hated them. Thus, they were my 'neighbours'. But, in general terms, as my enemy, I can write against them as a group, because I hate their movement and actions, but not them. Hopefully you can see what I am getting at.

Another example: should we help those in foreign countries who loathe God and say so, and who hate God's people? No, generally we should not, because God warns us about it. But, among the people there may be one or two whom God wishes us to help as individuals. Why? Either as a witness to His saving grace, or as a stumblingblock. In each and every case, who is our 'neighbour' in real terms depends on the testimony of the Holy Spirit to our hearts. Everyone is potentially our neighbour, unless God says otherwise to our spirit.

We must preach to everyone regardless of nation or creed. But, if they turn us away we must shake the dust off our sandals and never return, because they have rejected our God. The matter of 'neighbour' is, as you see, not so easy to interpret on a mere word-for-word basis, because we are not dealing only with scripture (historic speech to specific persons) but also with its theology (matters arising from the scriptures). Thus, everyone is our 'neighbour', but the Lord may, or may not, call us to separate from some, for His own reasons, through discernment (as the 2 Chronicles text proves).

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Verses 38-42

1.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

2.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

3.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

4.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

5.

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Jesus went on, accompanied by the apostles, the 70, and broader number of disciples and followers, until they came to another village. A woman named Martha ('she was rebellious', from the Aramaic: 'mistress') "received him into her house". The word 'received' means to take in as a guest; Jesus knew the family.

Martha was the sister of Lazarus and Mary of Bethany. It is possible that Martha was now living in another town, but it could also mean she still lived in Bethany (see John 11:1), in which case the 'certain village' was Bethany. This may indeed be the case given the next verse, which states that she lived with her sister.

Luke 10

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 April 2013 14:46

Mary sat at the feet of Jesus as He spoke, devouring every word He uttered. But, her sister, Martha, was “cumbered about much serving”. She was distracted and, as the word *perispao* puts it, she was ‘over-busy’ with the chores of hospitality, and her annoyance at her sister for just sitting down and listening to Jesus spilled over. She complained ‘Lord, don’t you care that while I am so busy, Mary does nothing? Tell her to help me!’

Jesus, ever aware of His coming demise, knew the time was short and replied with kindly admonition. We know this was His attitude, because he repeats the name “Martha, Martha” in soft tone. He said ‘You are troubled by so many irrelevant things! Only one thing matters right now, and Mary has chosen it; and this she will retain in her favour.’ Jesus compared Martha’s busyness and Mary’s listening, calling it the “good part”: Mary was acting honourably and with usefulness; listening to Him while He was with them was what really mattered.

In churches throughout the world, Christians are ever so busy! They ‘must’ do this and ‘must’ do that! There is a full programme of events and things to do! Always, ‘doing’ is the ruling criterion in churches and in individual lives. Jesus put that myth right! He was telling Martha, in a kindly way, that though her intention - to treat Jesus as a guest according to Jewish custom – was good, this was not the time to fuss around, or even to provide food.

When Jesus speaks, everyone should stop what they are doing and listen intently, for what He says is greater than anything we may do in this life. Many women fuss around when more important things need to be done... I am not being derogatory; it is in their nature to fuss and get things right, bless them!

Churches, pastors (and women) need to ‘relax in the Lord’, to listen more than they ‘do’. We are called to ‘meet together’. But, as ‘churchiness’ develops a life of its own, so many unnecessary, and sometimes useless, themes also develop, leading the people into a religious bondage. They feel they ‘must’ do whatever they are asked to do, and ‘must’ have a full programme of events to follow.

This is without warrant. Each Christian is called to meet with others – but how they meet and what they do is not specified (with the exception of communion and baptism). Each believer is called by the *Spirit* to his or her own tasks; we should not be cajoled into doing something because a pastor or a programme decided to do it.

Luke 10

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To put it another way – the error of church programming is that the programmes are developed and initiated before God becomes involved! Someone decides this or that would be good to do, and so everyone else is drawn in to do it.

Spiritual truth declares that EVERY person in a local church MUST have exactly the same spiritual prompt from the Spirit to do something. Then they must come together to tell others what the Spirit has said – each will agree with the other. Any ‘programme’ will arise out of this individual leading, and there will be total unity of purpose. Anything else is man-made, without worth. Thus, spontaneous activity is the mark, not long-planned human endeavour.

Martha thought she was doing the right thing, but ‘doing’ is not the prime criterion commanded by God. He wants our hearts and minds more than our cooking, cleaning, paint-brushes, and full weekly calendar of events! It would be better for each local church to stay at home and commune with the Spirit as individuals, seeking the face of God.

The prayers should be individual, in the closet, and not made a public show. Mary reflected this adoring of the Saviour, while Martha’s busyness stopped her from sitting at Jesus’ feet. Think hard about the many things you do for your local church – are you truly called BY GOD to do them? Or, are they merely expected of you by peers with their own agenda?

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