

True Discipleship: Not All Doom and Gloom

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[0 : 00] In chapter 9, verse 18, you don't need to turn to it.

In that verse, the disciples discover Jesus' true identity.! That is, Jesus revealed Himself to them so that they understood exactly who He was.

Remember Peter's confession, you are the Christ of God. That pretty much clears it up, doesn't it? And so they get it now. Jesus is Messiah. He is Christ. The Christ. The long-awaited-for One. He is the Son of the Living God. By that confession, that's what Jesus, or rather Peter, is saying. So they get it now. Jesus is the promised King of glory.

He has come as the only remedy for sin. He has come to bring the kingdom of salvation in. And so the disciples get it. He's the promised Redeemer of His people.

[1 : 05] So that's kind of the high point, one of the high points in the Gospel of Luke. One of the high points in the lives of the twelve disciples. We call them apostles. But now that Jesus has granted His disciples this knowledge of who He really is, now that He's done that.

Then we get to chapter 9, verse 23. Jesus then immediately calls them to discipleship in its fullest sense. In its truest sense.

Purest sense. Jesus said to them these difficult words. He said, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

This is hard. This is a hard teaching. Hard to swallow. Hard to get a hold of. Basically saying there is no easy way to follow Jesus. If you're looking for one, there is no easy way.

It is a life of self-denial. True discipleship. That is, discipleship in its truest, fullest, purest sense.

[2 : 13] Actually cuts against the grain of who we all are, really. In reality. Cuts against self-love. Self-will. Self-promotion.

Self-preservation. It cuts against personal ambition. Self-denial. Jesus makes this very clear in this passage. And we studied this a number of weeks ago. True discipleship means self-denial.

There's no way around that. There's no way to soften that. In fact, we have a hard time even delving into the depths of the truth of that passage.

Because we have a natural-born resistance against it. But we would all agree that this is hard stuff for us to get a hold of. And so it means self-denial.

That's what true discipleship means. In fact, it may even mean death. Of course, for many of God's people over the centuries of Christianity, it has meant just exactly that.

[3 : 14] Death. Martyrdom. Did you know that there have been more Christians martyred in the last hundred years than all of the years combined since Christ came into the world?

It may mean death. Now, of course, it does not mean death for every true disciple. It likely will not mean death for us, true disciples.

We may never meet martyrdom in our lives. It is possible, of course. And it could happen. And maybe for the first time in our lives, we could see the possibility of that.

But it's likely not going to mean death for us. And so when we get to chapter 9, verse 24, these verses speak of the willingness that we all true disciples must have to lose all that we have for the sake of Christ.

Not just death, but all that we have. Jesus said, For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

[4 : 21] You know what Jesus is saying. Discipleship is a call to absolute submission to God, to the Lord Jesus.

It is saying to Jesus, I abandon myself. I answer your call, Lord. And whatever it is that you want of me, I willingly give it to you.

It is all yours, Lord, even my life. To the point of death, if necessary. That's what it means. And this is a hard reality.

And yet this is the call for all those who would follow Jesus. All of you here this morning. This is not just some theory we're talking about here. We're not just talking about some super level or elite level of discipleship.

We're not talking about discipleship of those 70 that somehow that is unique to all other disciples.

We are, remember, the extension of those disciples that were sent out, those 70 sent out.

[5 : 23] This is for all of us. And so it's hard for us to get a hold of this. Hard to accept this. It's tough teaching. It's hard teaching. And then in chapter 9, verse 27, True disciples are called to forsake everything else in the world.

Not just themselves and what they have, but even forsaking all other attachments and loves and so forth. And to follow Jesus. To sacrifice all of other things that we enjoy and have and love.

To sacrifice them, if need be, to follow Jesus. That is the call to discipleship. It's self-denial. It's self-sacrifice. It is a call even to death itself.

But it's certainly a call to death to self. As one commentator, Bible commentator put it, It isn't that the Lord will divest you of all of those things necessarily.

It is that you show the cry of your heart at its deepest point. That your salvation is so precious to you. That your place in the eternal kingdom of God is worth so much to you.

[6 : 37] That forgiveness of sin is so valuable to you. That you would hold nothing back were Jesus to ask for it. That really does define it quite well.

True discipleship. Discipleship in its purest sense. And so you would agree with me, I think. This is hard. Right?

This isn't any kind of warm fuzzy. It's hard. It's hard. True discipleship is a hard, not easy calling.

And then when we get to chapter 10, verse 1, Jesus appoints the 70 and he sends them out.

And that's exciting. And there's really kind of a thrilling commissioning service that takes place here.

And yet again, Jesus tells them that this is not going to be a walk in the park.

What I'm sending you to do. He said, I'm exposing you to danger. Hostility. He said, I'm sending you out as lambs among ravenous, vicious wolves.

[7 : 45] You will have to forfeit all self-reliance as well. And even reliance in your fellow man.

Because you are to rely totally upon God for every single thing.

And some will receive you. That is, they're going to receive what you're preaching. Many will not.

He said to them. And you're going to have the distasteful duty to declare my judgment upon those who reject you.

Because to reject you is to reject me. And to reject me is to reject the only God and Savior there is. The only hope that there is.

And he said to them that you're going to have to tell them. Those who reject you. Reject me. Reject the gospel.

You're going to have to tell them. That it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment. For Sodom.

And Sidon. And Tyre. Those wicked, idolatrous, Canaanite, Gentile cities.

[8 : 45] It's going to be more tolerable for those wicked cities than it is going to be for you who have heard the gospel. Yet rejected it. You're going to have to tell them that.

This is hard. Isn't it? I mean true discipleship means complete sacrifice. It is life consuming. It is all demanding.

But that's what it is. That's what it is. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Some of you are familiar with him. He was a Lutheran pastor back during the days of Nazi Germany.

And Bonhoeffer participated in the Protestant resistance to Hitler's wicked regime. And because of that he was imprisoned.

Eventually he was hanged. Bonhoeffer wrote a book. The Cost of Discipleship. Which of course was a subject he well knew. And in it he wrote.

[9 : 53] When Christ calls a man. He bids him come. And die. I don't know if we understand that kind of discipleship.

And when we hear about it. And begin to understand it from scripture. It's not something that's easy for us to receive. Certainly it's not something we really like to hear about.

And think about. Bonhoeffer also wrote. He said the only man who has the right to say he is justified by grace. Which is what we say don't we?

He said the only man who can say. Has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone. Is the man who has left all. To follow Christ.

It's tough stuff. Now obviously the 70 were made of similar stuff. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer. And others who have followed him even.

[10:53] The 70 were appointed. The 70 were sent out two by two. And the 70 were willing. I think clearly they were. They said in effect yes Lord.

Salvation is so valuable to us. Forgiveness of sin. And eternal life in heaven. Is so precious to us. That we would gladly.

Forfeit everything. We would gladly pay. Whatever price. You require of us. I'm just kind of setting the stage here.

Because. This is hard stuff. That we've been studying for a number of weeks. And. We can't avoid it. Because it's right there in the gospel of Luke. And you say. Well let's just go to some other gospel.

It's over there too. Well let's just not deal with this. Let's go to the epistles. Well. It's in the epistles. The letters in the New Testament. You can't go anywhere in scripture. And avoid.

[11:48] The. The. The truths. The teachings. The reality of true discipleship. Discipleship in its purest sense. Which is a discipleship that we've all been called to. All of us.

Every one of us. And so the better part of. Two chapters in Luke. We've had to deal with these hard teachings. And now. Really. I think we're kind of ready for something upbeat. Aren't you?

Something a little less intense. We're kind of ready for something that's joyful. And. By the way. That's what Luke gives us here in.

Verse 17. So let's read it. Now that you're. Ready. Really ready. For something good. Well it's all been good. Something uplifting. And let's read it.

Chapter 10. Starting with verse 17. Then the 70. Returned. With. Joy. Joy. Now that's an indication.

[12:46] That now we're going to have something. I mean this is going to be something good. They returned with joy. Saying Lord. You can almost. Sense their excitement. And.

You know. Their hearts are just full. And overflowing. Lord. Even the demons. Are subject to us. In your name. And he said to them.

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold. I. Give you the authority. To trample on serpents. And scorpions. And over. All the power of the enemy.

And nothing shall by. Any means hurt you. Nevertheless. Do not rejoice. In this. That the spirits. Are subject to you. But rather rejoice. Because your names are written in heaven.

In that hour. Jesus rejoiced. There's that word again. Joy. Rejoice. Rejoiced. He rejoiced. In the spirit. And said. He actually prayed.

[13:44] I thank you. Father. Lord of heaven and earth. That you have hidden these things. From the wise. And prudent. And revealed them to babes. Even so. Father. For so.

It seemed good in your sight. All things have been delivered to me. By my father. And no one knows. Who the son is. Except the father. And who the father is. Except the son.

And the one to whom the son. Wills to reveal him. Then he turned to his disciples. And said privately. Blessed are the eyes. Which see the things you see.

For I tell you. That many prophets and kings. Have desired to see what you see. And have not seen it. And to hear what you hear. And have not heard it.

Incredible passage of scripture. And it's God's word. This is God's word. Now. Clearly. And I don't have to.

[14:41] Have you look very closely. To see this. Everything about this passage. Points us to something. Worth rejoicing about. I mean.

Even the word joy. And rejoicing. Is repeated a number of times. In the passage. It's all focused on that. Here's what. The writer. Of Luke. Or Luke.

Is writing to us. Here's what the Holy Spirit. Has inspired him to write to us. That we are to rejoice. About something. And if we were to identify. In a word.

The primary object. Of rejoicing. In this passage. It would be. In a word. Grace. That's how we started.

The worship service. This morning. Singing about. Grace. That's what this is about. This passage. Highlights. The grace.

[15:36] Of God. And so the object. Of our rejoicing. Is grace. And specifically. Three things. About grace. Grace. Saving grace. Sovereign grace.

And. Surpassing grace. These three things. The saving. Sovereign. Surpassing. Grace. Of God. That's what we have.

In this passage. Let's look at each of these. First. Rejoice. Over. Saving. Grace. Rejoice.

That's something to rejoice over. Rejoice. Over. Saving grace. And that is essentially. What the disciples. Were rejoicing about. And. Let's just walk. A few paces. Through this text.

Starting with verse 17. Then the 70. Returned. With joy. Let's just stop right there. Because. There is a reason. To. To. To be rejoicing. Right there.

[16:35] Think about it. All. Seventy. By the grace of God. All 70. Returned. Safe and sound. All right. They went out.

As lambs. Sent out. In the midst of wolves. And Jesus warned them. And he knew they would be rejected. And yet all 70. Returned. Safe and sound. And we'd like for that.

To be just the norm. For. All those who are sent out. In his name. To preach and teach the gospel. But it's not of course. The norm. So. But. This is.

At least. A clue. That what we have here. Is something to rejoice over. And it's the grace of God. But there's a whole lot more here. Than just the fact. That the 70.

Were able to return. Safe and sound. There's more here. Look at it. Then the 70. Returned with joy. And what did they say? What was the. Highlight.

[17:28] Of their testimony. Their. Their kind of mission trip. Sharing time. What was the highlight of it? Lord. Even the demons. Are subject to us.

In your name. Wow. What. What does that mean? What is that about?

And more importantly. What does it have to do with us today? Because this has. Everything to do with us today. As well. Well in the first place. You do know.

That Satan. Has a kingdom. You know that? I'm not trying. Asking you to recall. Certain science. Certain fictional movies. That you have watched. You know. Kind of. Most of those. Just distorted anyway. But Satan does have a kingdom. It's a well organized kingdom.

[18:24] You know that. Don't you? And so. Satan has a kingdom. And since the fall of man. In the garden of Eden. His kingdom. His kingdom has been established. Here. In this fallen world.

This fallen creation. And Paul said. In Ephesians chapter 2. In verse 2. That the unbelieving world. Walks. According to the prince. Of the power of the air.

That's Satan. The spirit. He goes on. Said. The spirit. Who now works. In the sons of disobedience. Talking about unbelievers. It is the. It is Satan. The unbelievers.

Of this world. Walk according to the power. Of Satan. And the works. He's working in. The sons of disobedience.

Unbelievable. That explains a lot. About our world. Today. 1st John 5. 19. The whole world. Lies under the sway. Or the rule.

[19:18] Of the wicked one. That's Satan. Right? Yes. Absolutely. The whole world. Talking about the unsaved world. Lies under. The bondage.

The rule. The rulership. The sway. Of the wicked one. Satan. And so now Jesus. Had come. To overpower. Satan's kingdom.

That's what we need to understand. He came to overpower. Satan's kingdom. And at the same time. To establish. His own kingdom. And so a part. Of Jesus' ministry.

Was. To prove. To demonstrate. To the world. His power. Over Satan. And that's why Jesus rebuked. And defeated Satan. At his temptation. And that is why Jesus.

Exorcised. And banished. Demons. Everywhere he went. And that is why. He delegated. That power. To the twelve apostles. When he sent them out.

[20:13] In John chapter 9. Verse 1. Or excuse me. Luke chapter 9. Verse 1. He gave them power. And authority. Over all demons. And that is why. He manifested. The same power.

Over Satan. Through the 70. Who were sent out here. In chapter 10. Even the demons. They said. Are subject. To us. In your name. That is.

In your name. That is by your power. Your authority. Now that's wonderful. And exciting. But what does that have to do. With. With us. Do we have that same power?

Well let's move. A little bit further. How does Jesus respond? They've come back.

With this great report. They're beside themselves. About. What they were able to do. In the name of Jesus. And how does Jesus respond?

[21 : 09] Well his response is. Maybe at first. A little perplexing. He said. Verse 18. I saw Satan. Fall like lightning.

From heaven. That sound like. A response. That was appropriate. To the time. I mean. It's a little confusing.

But don't fail to understand. What's going on here. Many have. Get this straight. The disciples. They have returned. From their mission trip.

Rejoicing. They said. Even the demons. Are subject to us. In your name. And so they're excited. They're rejoicing. And Jesus responded.

With some rejoicing. Of his own. That's first and foremost. What we need to see. In his response. He's joining them. In their joy. In fact.

[22 : 03] He was already rejoicing. And now they've come back. And they're rejoicing. And he's joining them. In their rejoicing. Listen. That's first and foremost. What we need to understand.

And in effect. He is saying to them. Now listen. Yes. I know. I know the demons.

Have been subject. To you in my name. I've. Been watching. I've seen it all. I was watching.

Here's what he's saying. I was watching. As the kingdom. Of Satan. Was beginning. To be destroyed. Satan's.

Kingdom. Is falling. Now. That's something. To rejoice about. That's what Jesus saw. He sent out the 70.

[23 : 05] And they were preaching. The gospel. And they said that. Even the demons. Are subject in your name. And Jesus said. I know. I've been seeing that. Satan is falling.

His kingdom. Is falling. You see. In the context. Of the passage. What Jesus is saying. In particular. Is. I saw Satan.

When he said. I saw Satan. Fall like lightning. He was not. Referring. To Satan's. Original fall. From. The. The realm. Of heaven. Where God's throne is.

Falling. From his. Position. His high position. As. One of the. Archangels. As. Lucifer. Now. Jesus. Did see that.

And in the. Larger. Sense. Jesus. Is seeing. All of that. Satan. Actually. Falling. And. A third. Of the demons. Falling.

[23 : 59] With him. He. Saw. That. He. Was present. When that. Took place. And. He. Also. Sees. His. Fall. In. The. Ultimate. Future.

Sense. The. Ultimate. Destruction. Of. Satan. And. His. Kingdom. He. Sees. All of that. But. In. Particular. Here. he's talking about something he saw as the 70 were out there sharing the gospel in those various cities in the region of Judea.

He saw all of that. And we also know that from the language. Now this gets a little technical, but the verb saw. Feoreo is the Greek word and it is in the imperfect tense and in the indicative mood.

What does that mean? Well, we could translate it literally this way. Jesus said to them, or of course they first said, even the demons are subject unto us in your name.

And Jesus says in response, I know, I was continually watching Satan fall. And by the way, the New American Standard is the only one that really brings that out in the translation.

[25 : 12] He's saying, I was watching you as you were sharing the gospel of the kingdom and I saw Satan defeated over and over and over again every time someone received that message and was gloriously saved.

I saw Satan falling, falling, falling every time. I saw Satan's kingdom beginning to crumble. In fact, Jesus said in John chapter 12 verse 31, Now is the judgment of this world.

Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. See, this is what Jesus, this is something to rejoice about. To rejoice, it's almost as if Jesus was saying to them, as they were out, he was saying, and now it begins.

The very reason why I've come. Watch my kingdom come. Watch my kingdom grow.

And watch Satan's kingdom crumble. The cross, of course, will be the death knell for Satan. And the fulfillment, by the way, of Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, where the Bible says, Satan will bruise the Messiah's foot or heel, but the Messiah will what?

[26 : 26] Crush Satan's head. And the gospel will then really break out in Jerusalem at the Pentecost, after Jesus' death and resurrection, when thousands will be saved and baptized.

And from Jerusalem, the gospel will then spread to Judea, and then Samaria, and to the ends of the world. And eventually the whole earth is going to be full of the knowledge of the Lord, the Messiah, and men and women and boys and girls from every tribe and every tongue and every people and every nation are going to be brought out from under the bondage, the rule, the sway of Satan and brought into the glorious kingdom of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Praise the Lord. That's something to rejoice about. This is what Jesus is seeing. That's why he responded in the way he responded to the disciples' report. Like saying, I saw this.

Kingdom of Satan is falling. Verse 19, he said, Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Which I believe really is a unique gift given to the 70 for their particular ministry, for that time of ministry. But what really applies to us is what he says next.

[27 : 48] Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this. Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you. I've given you a special gift, a special manifestation of my presence, and I'm manifesting myself through you over the demons and so forth, but do not rejoice in that.

But rather rejoice, why? Because your names are written in heaven. Again, rejoice over saving grace.

That's what these verses are all about. You see, you and I have not been given apostolic power the same as the 12 apostles.

We've not been given that. No one has. We're unique. And we do not even have the exact same power that Jesus delegated to the 70.

But we are instruments of the Lord Jesus Christ by which the grip of Satan is broken.

[29 : 03] We are soldiers that have invaded the kingdom of darkness to rescue those who are held under the sway of Satan himself and his demons.

And our weapon is what? It's the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ. The power of darkness is crushed by the gospel.

That's what this passage is about. First, rejoice over saving grace. Second, rejoice over sovereign grace.

This grace is sovereign. It's all about God. God is doing it all. And it's interesting. Verse 21, in that hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit.

So the disciples were rejoicing. Jesus joins them. He's rejoicing. And they're all rejoicing together, having a great, great time in the Lord. And then Jesus prays. It's a praise prayer, actually.

[30 : 10] The Bible says, Jesus said, I thank you. Literally, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight. This is interesting. What Jesus is saying is this. He's saying, Father, this is just like you to do it this way.

Your people have been waiting for several thousand years for the Messiah to come. And now He has come.

I've come. And you've sent me into the world and you did not surround me with kings and priests and scribes and leaders and, you know, the shakers and the movers, the really influential people, the powerful and the intelligent of this world.

You didn't surround me with them. Instead, you surrounded me with fishermen and tax collectors and farmers and zealots and slaves, even.

[31 : 33] Common people. Not the great and important people, but the common people. People that, really, other people look down on.

That's what you've done. And, Father, this is just like you to do it this way. Because then, you know, this proves to the world that this thing is not of man.

It's of God. Isn't that something? That's why He's chosen you, me. So, Jesus praises the Father for His sovereign grace.

Now, I admit to you that there are and always have been some pretty bright bulbs in the Christian community. There are, living today, some people I admire.

I can name some of them. And all throughout the centuries, God has had a few that have just risen to the top and been very influential and very intelligent and even sometimes wealthy and very, very influential.

[32 : 33] But, listen, the kingdom of God will come through the obedient work of just common people like you and me. That gives God all the glories.

There's no other way to explain the success of the spread of the gospel, the spread of Christianity in the world. There's no way to explain it other than the grace of God, the sovereign grace of God. And the results, of course, of the gospel that we share is also sovereign, right?

People come to faith not because we're good at sharing the gospel or we've been able to persuade them in some special way and so they say, well, I see it.

That's what I want. It doesn't have anything to do with us. It's the sovereign grace of God. Verse 22, all things have been delivered to me by my faith and everything that's coming to me is going to come to me and it's been granted by the Father, delivered me by the Father.

No one knows who the Son is except the Father. I mean, really know Him. No one but the Father and who the Father is except the Son and the one, here's the important phrase, the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

[33 : 55] or more literally, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

It's all the work of God. Jesus said something similar in John 6, 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

No one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father. It's all God. It's all God in who He has chosen to bear the gospel.

That proves that it's got to be God because, my goodness, how could it be done by feeble people like you and me? Weak people. And the very results of the gospel message, those coming to Christ, is all God.

It's all His work. Rejoice in saving grace. Rejoice over sovereign grace. And then one more. Rejoice over what I want to call surpassing grace.

[34 : 58] And really, I mean here, the surpassing knowledge of His grace. The revelation of the grace of God in redemption and salvation is a progressive thing.

It has been all throughout the Old Testament and through the New Testament. It's been a progressive revelation. Each revelation of God's grace in redemption surpasses the one that has come before.

Verse 23, And He turned to His disciples and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see and have not seen it.

and to hear what you hear and have not heard it. He's saying to His 70 disciples, He's saying, You know what?

You know more of God's redeeming grace than all of the people in the Old Testament that you have highly revered. You know more about the grace of God than Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, many others unnamed and all the prophets.

[36 : 33] You know more than all of them. as Hebrews 11, 13 says, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, that is a glimpse of them afar off, and they were assured by them.

What they saw, what God allowed them to just get a glimpse of. They were assured of it. A great confidence in it. The basis of their faith.

And it goes on to say, God having provided something better for us. And the us here means the first century church.

God has provided for us. All the prophets and all the Old Testament saints, they saw this from afar and they were assured of it. But you've been given a surpassing thing.

a much better thing. More revelation of His grace. Again, that's the first century church. But what about us today? If this was true of the first century church, how more true is it of us today?

[37 : 46] Think about it. We have the completed Word of God. God's full revelation is right here in the Bible and we have it today.

All that God has to say He has said through His Son and through His Word. We have the testimony in this book. We have the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself recorded in the Gospels.

It's right there for everyone to read. And we have the inspired testimony of the Apostles and others closely associated with the Apostles.

We have all that in the letters in the New Testament. We have the revelation of things yet to come. We have all of this.

And so there are things you and I have been graciously privileged to know and to see about God's redeeming grace.

[38 : 57] That not only did the Old Testament saints never know about, but also these are things that even the original Apostles and the 70 disciples that were sent out did not yet know.

Not at the time. Do you understand? Just as the disciples could rejoice that what God graciously allowed them to see of His grace, His redeeming grace, was infinitely more than even what the prophets and kings, though they longed to see it, did not see it.

If that's true of them, then what about us and what we have been given to see? And yet, with that comes a warning, a challenge.

The Bible says, to whom much is given, much is required. required. And so we have God's plan, His redeeming grace, all that that involves, and what He decided in eternity past to do.

If we have all of that, we know all of it, we've seen it all. And so if that's true, then what are we doing? What are we doing?

[40 : 36] Thank you.