

Title: Don't Be Offended – Part 2

Text: Luke 7:24-30

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Proverbs 3:24 tells us that *"if we heed God's wisdom, our sleep will be sweet and will be without fear as we trust in him."* And so, if you have your copy of God's word with you this morning, and I hope you do, please turn to Luke 7. We're going to be looking at verses 24-30 this morning, which continues the section of scripture that we started last week, one that revolves around the central idea of being offended. We see that as kind of the connective tissue between all of these passages in verse 23, verse 30, verse 32, and later on in even verse 39.

And I think that's very interesting, that one of the very first things that Luke ever warns us about in his gospel when it comes to Jesus is the danger of being offended. In other words, Luke is recognizing that as he begins to unfold for us the person and work of Jesus Christ, and as he's beginning to show us the need to respond to Jesus in humble submission and faith, Luke also recognizes that the human heart is susceptible to observe this very same person and work of Jesus Christ and to veer off in a completely opposite direction and become offended, to view Christ like a scandal that you either avoid or that you decry and reject altogether. And so, Luke warns us in these passages, do not be offended, and Luke is wise to do so because scripture makes it clear that Christ is always offensive to the fallen sinful human heart.

First, Christ's person is often very offensive to people. Isaiah 8:14 predicts that *"he himself will not only become a sanctuary but also a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling.... that many will stumble over,"* and that is the truth. Just a simple teaching of Jesus's person like we did in Luke 1 & 2 offends people. If you point out that Jesus is described as both Yahweh God and the Son of the Most High God, as both of the Holy Spirit and conceived in Mary, as both fully God and fully man, as both the Son of Adam and the Son of Abraham, as both David's son and David's Lord, as both King of Israel and King of the world. Just the preaching of Christ's simple person offends people.

Second, Christ's preaching is often offensive to people. In John 6:60-61, Jesus was finishing up one of his sermons to the crowd and we're told *"When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?' But Jesus, in knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, 'Do you take offense at this?'"* Jesus's preaching is often offensive and that is the truth as well. Just a simple overview as we've done of Jesus's teaching in Luke 3, 4, 5, and 6 offends people. If you point out that Jesus taught that all of humanity is under God's wrath, that only he and he only can save you from the wrath to come, that nothing that you will ever do will ever merit or earn acceptance before God, that his word bears omnipotent, irresistible power over the fish, over the sky, over the legions of Satan, and yes, even over you. And that he has owed the allegiance of all men, that he alone has the authority to forgive and that all of redemptive history centers on him, that he is the Lord of the Sabbath and the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to all to believe. And that everyone who truly trusts in him alone will always experience a complete transformation and overhaul of their thoughts, ambitions, and affections.

Christ's person is offensive, Christ's preaching is offensive, third, Christ's passion, his death on the cross is often offensive to people. And Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:23, *"but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block of offense to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles."* So just like they did around the cross on the day that Jesus died, the world still mocks the idea that the Son of God, the appointed King and Judge over all the earth, would ever allow himself to die naked on a cross as a criminal for the payment of the sins of his people. Ignoring the clear heart and desires of Christ in going to the cross they laugh at the idea as being akin to cosmic child abuse. And rather than seeing the gospel as the power of God unto salvation and the demonstration of Christ's love for his people, they see it as a ridiculous and a shameful idea.

Christ's person is offensive, Christ's preaching is offensive, Christ's passion is offensive, and fourth, Christ's providence is often offensive to people. In Matthew 13:20-21, Jesus is giving a parable called the Parable of the Soils, and he says that there are some people who even though they receive the message of the gospel for a time, he warns that *"when tribulation or persecution arise on account of the word, immediately they fall away,"* same word, they are offended. Jesus' providence is offensive, and that is the truth as well. Think about it. What are the reasons that you often hear from people regarding why they refuse to trust in Christ? It's usually not a theological or philosophical reason that they give. It's most often a personal reason. Something has happened in their life, and they're angry, confused, or resistant towards God over it. And as we saw last week, John the Baptist was struggling with this very thing while he lay in prison.

So, Christ's person is offensive, Christ's preaching is offensive, Christ's passion is offensive, Christ's providence is offensive, but you know what? Christ's people shouldn't be offensive. 1 Corinthians 10:32 says, *"Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God."* And again, 2 Corinthians 6:3, *"We should put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found in our ministry."* In other words, if people be offended, then let them be offended because of Christ, not because of us. Let them be offended over our sharing of his person, his preaching, his passion, or his providence, but let them not be offended over our own improprieties. Let the offense of our lives always be solely Jesus. And so, as Christians, we don't want to surrender to the idol of this current age, to people's offended feelings, and yet neither do we seek to purposely trample on them. We should seek to respond to people's offenses with discerning love.

And we saw a perfect example of how to do that last week with Jesus's interaction with John the Baptist. If you remember in verses 18-23, John was having some problems understanding Jesus's words and actions as they were being reported to him in jail. What Jesus was doing in teaching didn't seem to square with what John was anticipating and predicting. John's offense was grounded in a degree to spiritual ignorance. And so, John sends two guys up to Jesus and asks him directly, *"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"* Can you imagine that? John is asking Jesus directly; did I get this wrong? Was I wrong about you? And how does Jesus respond to that? Did he respond harshly and say, what's wrong with you people? Didn't you see the Spirit settle on me? Didn't you yourself say, behold the Lamb of God? Didn't your father ever teach you the prophet Isaiah? Is that how Jesus responded to John? No. Jesus does none of that. Instead, Jesus just spends the next hour or so slowly and patiently giving John more truth, the truth that he needed to strengthen his tottering faith. Because John's offense was grounded in ignorance. And Jesus responds in discerning love.

And we're going to see that throughout this entire passage. Jesus shows discerning love to those who are offended first due to an ignorance of God's word. Second, due to a rejection of God's word, that's what we're going to be looking at this week in verses 24-30. And then third, due to a disregard for God's word, and that's next week in verses 31-35. And in each one of these cases, we are both warned by Christ not to be offended ourselves, as well as taught by Christ how to respond to others when they are offended. Due to an ignorance, a rejection, or a disregard of God's word.

And so, with that in mind, if you're able, please stand with me out of honor and attention for the word of God as I get to read the passages before us today from Luke 7:24 on into verse 30. Our author, Dr. Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes these words for us today. Luke 7:24,

"When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)"

This is the word of God, whose precepts we will never forget, for by them God has given us life. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for the word that you have set before us today. Father, we thank you that it exposes the heart. And I pray, Father, that you would do heart surgery by your Spirit using the sword of the Spirit, your word today, so that we might understand what is going on beneath the surface in our own hearts. And I pray, Father, that there is a rejection of your word in any area of our lives. I pray, Father, that you would expose that, and you would give us grace to repent of it and to turn in faith to Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that we would be humble before your word today for your honor and your glory.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.
You may be seated.

So, after Luke shows us that a person can be offended by the truth of Christ because of an ignorance of God's word, which was demonstrated through the illustration of John the Baptist, he's now going to show us in the case of the Pharisees, that a person can be offended by the truth, not out of ignorance, but because of a blatant rejection of God's word. And that's in verses 24-30. Luke writes in verse 24, *"When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John."* So maybe the visit from these two messengers had stirred up the crowd a bit into thinking about John, this other great teacher that had just stepped off the scene that Jesus was following in. And so, Jesus turns to all of them and asks

them, in essence, I know all of you went out into the wilderness to hear John preach, so let me ask you a question.

And he asked this question three times because it's a very important question. He says, first, *"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"* And even if you take Jesus' words here purely at face value, the obvious answer to this question is what? No. Yes, nobody says, hey, I've got a great idea this Friday night let's go out into the middle of the desert and look at some reeds and swaying in the wind. Wouldn't that be fun? Nobody does that. And so, Jesus is drawing attention to the significance of John's ministry and message. People don't go out into the middle of the wilderness in droves to go watch grass grow. They went out into the wilderness because something important, something significant, something arresting was happening out there. They didn't go watch reeds get waving about in the wind.

But Jesus also probably has a slightly deeper and double meaning to what he's saying here because look at what he says next in verse 25. He said, *"What then did you go out to see?"* Second question. *"A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts."* Now, that's very interesting. In a very short span of time, Jesus puts this image of a reed being shaken by the winds side by side with this image of a man wearing soft clothing living in splendid luxury in a king's court. And just to be clear, that is not a positive description that Jesus is giving of an individual here. That word soft is used over in 1 Corinthians 6:9 to describe a man who is sinfully effeminate. It was used in the ancient culture to describe a person who was morally soft and self-indulgent who's someone who is wishy-washy and easily influenced. And so, Jesus is essentially saying, did you go out into the middle of the wilderness to see another politician? Someone who just constantly changes their views based on the latest whim of popular opinion.

Listen, you don't need to go out into the wilderness to find someone like that. They're a dime a dozen. And you know exactly where they live. They live where? Not in the wilderness. They live where? *"In kings' courts."* And oh boy, the moment Jesus said that I'm sure almost everybody there knew exactly who Jesus was talking about. See, in a very short span of time, Jesus has just put this image of a reed shaken by the winds side by side with this image of a man wearing soft clothing, living in splendid luxury in a king's court, and all in the context of John the Baptist's recent arrest. By who? Herod Antipas, the man who had just arrested John. You see, archeologists have uncovered that when Antipas minted his currencies during his first century reign, his coins almost always prominently displayed the iconography of giant Galilean reeds, which would often reach heights of 10 to 20 feet tall. And so, Antipas was clearly associated during this time with the image of a reed. And as for being a morally soft individual that can be easily shaken and influenced, oh man, does that match Herod Antipas to a tee.

Just looking at scripture alone, we're told in Matthew 14:5 that Herod arrested John because *"he wanted to kill him, but then he didn't because he was afraid of the crowd."* And then, Mark 6:20 tells us that after listening to John, Herod becomes greatly perplexed and he actually starts *"keeping him safe.... and listening to John gladly."* But then, while he's in the process of keeping John safe, Matthew 14:6-12 actually tells us that Herod eventually beheads John the Baptist after being influenced by Herodias and her

daughter. And then to finish it all off, history tells us that the most consequential and destructive decision Antipas ever made in his entire life to fight with his brother Caligula over the title of king was a decision made not ultimately by him, but ultimately by the jealousy of his own unlawful wife Herodias. A decision which would eventually lead to his own exile and banishment to the other side of the entire known world. And so, Jesus is saying, why did you all go out into the middle of the wilderness? Was it to see someone like Herod Antipas? A wishy-washy, morally soft, easily influenced, spineless individual who constantly changes their views in light of the latest whims of popular opinion? The obvious answer is no.

You traveled out into the middle of wilderness to hear someone whose speech was unaffected by everybody else. You went out into the middle of nowhere to hear and to see something different. *"What then did you go out to see? A prophet?"* And the obvious answer here is what? *"Yes."* They went out into the desert to see someone who was not a reed, who was not blown about by human opinions. They went out there to see something different, to hear an individual who was unwaveringly clear, consistent, and courageous in both his mission and his message. They had come out to hear a prophet speak the very words of God to them. And that is the point that Jesus is making here.

John the Baptist, by your own confession and your own attention to him, going out into the middle of the wilderness, you did that because you knew deep down he was a prophet who spoke from God. There's no other reason why you would have done that. John was a prophet. He was someone who clearly and decisively spoke for God and with God's authority. He was a mouthpiece for the Lord to them, which is why the people could not ignore him. They literally went out into the middle of nowhere to hear John preach because they knew he was a genuine prophet who was enabled by the Spirit of God to preach his word.

End of verse 26, *"Yes, and I tell you more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'" See, John was more than a prophet, he was the prophet prophesied by the prophets. John was the prophet predicted in Malachi 3:1, the one who would come in the Spirit and power of Elijah in front of the Lord when he comes to his temple. In front of Yahweh God himself, John was that prophet, the only prophet explicitly prophesied about by name in the entire Old Testament who would come in the Spirit and power of Elijah.*

And then Jesus says this in verse 28, *"I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John."* And by the way, that phrase born of women can mean just human, but it probably means something even a little bit more precise. It was likely a Hebrew idiom that signifies all of frail, sinful, mortal and fallen humanity. And that's because nearly every time that phrase appears in scripture, it addresses that, men who are corrupted by the fall. Job 14:1 says, *"Man who is born of women is few in days and full of number."* Or again, Job 15:14, *"What is man.... who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?"* And so, after, I think, Jesus skillfully excuses himself from this category, then says that among those who have ever been born after Adam, the greatest who has ever lived in the eyes of God ever was John the Baptist, the son of Zechariah the priest.

And yet, end of the verse, *"Yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."* Now hold on a moment, Jesus just said, *"no one is greater than John"* and then *"yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."* How can that be? How can the least person entering the kingdom be greater than the greatest prophet and human who has ever lived? Well as I was studying it, though it's confusing at first, I think the answer is quite simple. Over in 1 Peter 1:10-11, it says this, *"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories."* So quite frankly, the prophets didn't know all the details.

They didn't know who the Messiah would be, though they talked of his coming. They didn't know when he would come, though they talked of his coming. And they didn't know how he would accomplish salvation, though they prophesied his salvation. They were confused, as John says, about the Messiah needing to first suffer and then be glorified. They were great men; John was the greatest. But having ministered before the arrival and the suffering of Christ, there were some truths that they could never fully grasp. In fact, there were some truths that even the disciples couldn't fully grasp until the risen Christ literally shows up to their dining room table after his resurrection and says, hello, I'm back. Didn't I say that I would have to suffer and then three days later rise from the dead? Contrast that then with those of us who have come onto the scene now, after the glories of the personal redemption has been accomplished at the hand of Jesus Christ.

We know who the Messiah is now, don't we? He is Jesus of Nazareth, God the Son. We know when he has arrived. He arrived in the fullness of time. And we know how he accomplished salvation. It is by offering up his perfect life on the cross as a sacrificial payment for our sins. It is by rising again on the third day as a demonstration of his power and victory. And it is by ascending into heaven and sending the indwelling Holy Spirit to all those who trust in him. And so those of us who now live post-cross, who are now citizens of the kingdom through our allegiance to Jesus the King, are now subsequently to be regarded as greater, not in terms of significance or worth, but in terms of our level of understanding and blessedness.

We are experiencing the glories of a salvation that John merely pointed towards. The things that even the greatest prophet long to know of have been fully revealed to us. And so, in that sense even the least of us here this morning are greater than the greatest of prophets. And so Jesus is making the point that the crowd went out of their way to listen to John because they knew that John was a prophet who spoke from God, a prophet who spoke of greater things to come, namely, John spoke of the one who was to come, the one who stood before them that day, the one who had demonstrated all of that kingdom authority, Jesus the Christ, the saving sovereign of all. Follow him. That is Jesus's point.

John was a great man, therefore, there is no reason why anyone should ever reject the message of John. He was a prophet in the line of the prophets. He was the greatest prophet, the greatest man conceived by natural means ever. There is no reason why anyone should ever reject the message of John. And therefore, there is no reason why anyone should ever reject the message of Jesus being the Christ either because he is the one of whom John testified. Verse 29, *"And when all the people heard this, and the tax collectors also,"* right, they're in the category all themselves, poor guys, *"they declared God just."* In other words, even

the tax collectors got this. They understood the message having been baptized by the baptism of John. In other words, because the crowd had accepted the word of God as spoken by John, they were ready to accept the word of God as spoken by Jesus. Their acknowledgement of sin through John's baptism of repentance prepared them to listen to Jesus's message of salvation.

But verse 30, *"but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves."* They were offended by the offer of forgiveness in the teaching of Jesus. Why? *"Having not been baptized by him,"* that is John. In other words, because they refused to acknowledge their unrighteousness before God, they therefore refused to accept the gift of righteousness from God, the gift of Jesus Christ. As Romans 10:3-4 says, *"seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."* They were offended by Jesus because they didn't see their need for him.

It's like when I was growing up, I loved to draw, and I would draw all the time. My parents would buy me these notebooks, and I would fill them from cover to cover. And in the little pride of my six-year-old and seven-year-old and eight-year-old heart, I thought my drawings were fantastic. I was the next Michelangelo. And then my parents bought me a how to draw book. I was offended. I didn't want to read that book because I refused to acknowledge that I didn't know how to draw. And it was only after I became humble and realized my true depravity of drawing that I was willing then to look for a solution to that depravity of drawing by picking up the how to draw book. I was offended by the idea of a solution until I recognized a need for one.

So, it is when it comes to Jesus Christ. So many people are offended by the message of needing a Savior because in their minds they need no saving, and they need no righteousness at all. And that is the example with the Pharisees seeking to establish their own righteousness, they rejected the righteousness, the gift of righteousness that was being given by God himself. *"For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone believes."* See, the Pharisees were offended by Jesus not because of an ignorance of God's word like John was, but because of an outright hostile rejection of it. They rejected the word of God in Jesus because they had already rejected the word of God in John. They rejected the giver of salvation because they had rejected the message of repentance. They were offended by God's word given by God's messenger. It didn't matter who it was, and we'll look at that next week.

And more than that, the Pharisees were now actively working against it. John was finally gotten rid of, hallelujah, he's in prison. And now as Luke 6:11 revealed, the Pharisees *"filled with fury are now actively discussing with one another of how to get rid of this Jesus too."* So how does John, or how does Jesus respond to someone who is not only rejecting God's word for themselves, but is also actively trying to undermine the sharing of the gospel and God's word towards others? How did Jesus respond to these Pharisees and lawyers with loving discernment? How did he respond towards those who were offended because of a hardened rejection towards God's word? Well, first, as we study the scriptures in a passive sense, Jesus doesn't let them affect his message. And we shouldn't either.

In Matthew 15:12, *"Jesus' disciples come up to him after his teaching"* and say, hey, Jesus, we were out in the crowd, and *"did you know that the Pharisees were offended by what you were teaching?"* Guess how Jesus responds in that moment. Oh man, I didn't know that. So, let's see if we can word things maybe a little bit differently and repair that damage. No, Jesus says in verse 14, ignore them. *"They're blind guides."* In other words, they have no spiritual understanding. They're not innocently ignorant of God's word. They know God's word, and they've purposely rejected it. So, ignore them. I'm not going to let false teachers influence my message, and I'm certainly not going to mind if I offend false teachers by plainly declaring God's word. So, Jesus, in a passive sense, doesn't let these people who were rejecting it with a hardness of heart affect his message, and in second, in an active sense, Jesus doesn't let them affect his ministry.

See one of the terrible things about the Pharisees, and one of the most terrible things about many people today who reject God's word is that they never do it in isolation, do they? Not only do they reject God's word for themselves, but they also try to keep other people from accepting it also. It's like what you see from all of these so-called deconstructionists nowadays. They just can't deconstruct in the quietness of their own homes, can they? They got to write a book. They got to make a podcast. They got to do a YouTube video about it. Though nearly all of these people know the truth, they reject it, and then they try to keep other people from the truth also. And that's exactly what the Pharisees did. You'll see this in the condemnations that follow throughout the Gospel of Luke, it's that they tried to build walls between people and the Gospel through their false teaching, and Jesus didn't stand idly by and let them do that. He didn't let them affect his ministry. He actively called them out.

When you read through the Gospels, Jesus calls these false teaching Pharisees, broods of vipers, sons of the devil, blind fools, and whitewashed tombs. And in Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces seven woes or curses on them because of their hostility to the message of the Gospel. And he explains why his language is so sharp in Matthew 23:13, when he says this, *"woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven up in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in."* See, they were actively preventing people from entering the kingdom of heaven. They were actively leading people away from the saving truth of God, people who might have embraced it. They were actively building a wall between people and the saving Gospel. And so, Jesus actively confronts them face to face. He takes them on. You actually see another example of this lest you think, well, that's just Jesus and we're not him.

We see another example of this in Acts 13 and this is a real beauty. If I was to ask you, give me a description of what you believe the Spirit-filled life looks like, no doubt you would think Galatians 5:22-23 and you'd be absolutely right. But I do want you to consider this morning, does your description of a Spirit-filled life allow for what we see in Acts 13? See, in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas are on the island of Cyprus and there's a governor that is interested in hearing the Gospel and the Word of God from Paul. But a Jewish false prophet called *"Elymas opposed them,"* according to verse 8, *"seeking to turn the proconsul,"* the governor, *"away from the faith"* that Paul was proclaiming in that message, in that moment. Now listen to this, Acts 13:9-10, *"But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?'"* And that's Paul, full of the Holy Spirit. And he doesn't let that false

teacher build a wall between the governor and the Gospel for one single second. He calls a false teacher a son of the devil and an enemy of all righteousness to his own face. He calls his false teaching a villainous lie and he does it with all the Holy Spirit, with perfect Christlikeness. He doesn't let him affect his ministry. And that's exactly how Jesus responds to someone who is offended because of their act of rejection to the truth. And he does it, and who are working to keep others from the truth also. He doesn't let them affect his message or his ministry. He responds in discerning love.

And here we are reminded of a very important truth, brothers and sisters. Sometimes, not always, but sometimes, the most loving thing you can do for a person who's rejecting and fighting against the Word of God is to give them the truth as intently as possible in loving hope that God will breach their hardened hearts, or at the very least, stop them from building deceptive obstacles to the Gospel's proclamation. As disciples of Jesus Christ, there is something that is a higher calling that we are called to follow, and that is not being nice, it is being like Christ. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to be willing to do what Christ did in discerning love, speak the truth into all situations.

So first, if this is you this morning, you're hearing the Word of God, or you have heard the Word of God in your life, and you are offended by some aspect of it, I call on you this morning, based on what we see from God's Word, to confess that sin to the Lord, to ask for forgiveness, and to say, Lord, humble me that I might receive your Word. Don't be offended. All you must decide to do is to determine, based on the Word of God, is what this person is saying to me true or is it not? And if it is not, I must reject it. But if according to God's Word it is true, then I must accept it. I must humble myself beneath the teaching of the Word, for if I am offended in this point, I will continue down, just as the Pharisees and the scribes did, down a path of offenses that leads eventually to eternal condemnation. I call on you this morning to repent of that sin of offense and submit in saving faith to Jesus Christ. Become a learner of Him. Don't be offended by rejection of God's Word.

Second, for the rest of us who have trusted in Christ, when people in our thin skin culture are offended by our plain and open proclamation of the truth, this is a call once again to respond in discerning love. When they are ignorant of God's Word, like we saw last week, you patiently keep on giving them the truth needed to strengthen their faith. If they're disregarding God's Word, as we're going to see next week, you move on to someone who is more open to God's Word. But if they're doing more than just disregarding the gospel, if they are actively rejecting it as we saw today and hindering others from hearing and responding to it, if they are attempting to keep the saving truth from reaching someone else, that's when it's time to follow Christ, brothers and sisters, and to contend for the faith and for the souls that are at stake in discerning love. That is when you must rebuke the false teacher to his face with the spiritual truths he seeks to ignore. You must confront his rejection of God's Word as intently as possible. Like Jesus, you must not allow them to affect the gospel message or ministry.

Now hopefully, you don't meet someone this militantly offended this week. But just in case you do, I want to remind you of Paul's encouragement to us that he gave to Timothy all those years ago in 2 Timothy 1:7. Timothy was also concerned about having to confront false teachers who were in spiritual leadership alongside him in a church. And Paul reminded him, as I remind you today, *"God has not given us a spirit of*

fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound mind.” This week you can respond to those who are offended by the truth with a discerning love, knowing that Jesus has given you as his disciple both the example and the ability to be faithful in your ministry and your message in this day. May God equip us for this very task, to give a word fitly spoken in our day for the glory of God, as we call on those around us who are both ignorant and who are hardened to not be offended, but rather to believe.

This is the word of God from Luke 7:24-30, which I consider a great privilege to be able to share with you today, in which I now commit to your further study and your faithful obedience until Jesus, who is the King, returns.

To that end, let's pray.

Father, I thank you so much for your word. I thank you for the example of Christ. And I pray, Father, that you would equip us as your people to be disciples of Jesus in our day. You have entrusted to us the saving gospel. So, Father, help us to be patient towards those who are ignorant, who have not heard the truths of your word, who do not understand, help us, Father, to come alongside them and to patiently and gently and consistently share with them the truth. Father, help us to do that in love. Help us to not grow impatient, but to understand that it is through the faithful seeding of your word into people's hearts that you bring forth the fruit of righteousness leading to eternal life. And Father, I pray that you would help us to be faithful in the proclamation of your truth even to those who are rejecting your word, even the most hardened of hearts. Father, I pray that we would follow in the example of Jesus as well, that if we see someone walking away from the truth and indeed encouraging others to do so, we in love would not remain silent, but that we would throw a splash of cold water of truth upon them to wake them up, that to reject your truth is no small thing, but that it leads to the most grievous of consequences. May we in love, love even the false teachers and those who are the most hardened in unbelief among us and around us, let us love them enough to contend for the faith, for their own hearts and minds.

For Father, I think of how Paul himself was a writer of your word. He murdered your sons and daughters, and yet you gave him life in your perfect patience. And so, Father, help us never to give up on anyone, but help us to contend for the faith, for your glory and for the good of the souls around us. May we do it all with courageous love, knowing the spirit that you have given us in Christ. And Father, I pray that our lives would underline the message so that when we communicate your truth and love, that person would already know deep in their hearts that we love them, for we have shown it day in and day out. Father, help this to be the testimony of our lives. For Father, we know that the world does not need to hear another politician when it comes to your word. The world needs to hear prophets who speak your word with boldness, for that is how it needs to be spoken. Give us grace to be such a body in this area and at this time.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

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