

"The First Commission"
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"And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town." (Matthew 10:1-15)

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A commission is a "charge; order; mandate; authority given". (Webster, 1828) Did the disciples have a choice to not accept Jesus' mandate? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Do I think that I would have been willing to accept the charge that Jesus laid on His disciples and to adhere to the conditions that Jesus set out for them? Explain.

The Scripture shows us the six "teams" to be sent out two-by-two and includes a few descriptions of folks (e.g., Matthew the tax collector). At the very end we see Judas Iscariot named, but what a description to follow a name — "who also betrayed him." John Piper reminds us that "John tells us in John 12:6 that he [Judas] was a thief. When Judas complained that Mary had wasted money in anointing Jesus, John comments, "He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it." If that sounds incredible, just think of the scandalous behavior of so-called Christian leaders today who use ministry gifts to buy \$39,000 worth of clothes at one store in a year, and send their kids on a \$29,000 trip to the Bahamas, and drive a white Lexus and a red Mercedes." How easy is it for Satan to tempt me to believe that taking something small or insignificant doesn't really matter "in the grand scheme of things" and why?

Note that Jesus “gave them authority” (v. 7). This was not a mission for any ordinary follower of our Lord; rather, Jesus sent them with the right to speak in His name. In that day, Jewish leaders and teachers could send out representatives who had the authority of the sender; when the representatives spoke, the commissioning agents spoke. That was the kind of authority our Lord gave them for their mission. The verb used in Mark 6:7, *apostellō*, confirms this, as that was the Greek term used for sending out representatives who had the authority of their commissioner. Thus, the preaching mission described in today’s passage foreshadows the official commissioning of certain men to teach with divine authority – the apostles (meaning “one who is sent out”). By what “divine authority”, if any, has Jesus given me to speak to others on His behalf?

In what way(s) am I able to provide others with relief from pain and/or suffering and from where do I believe such ability comes?

“You received without paying; give without pay.” (Matthew 10:8b) Jesus’ command was designed to magnify the glory of God’s free grace. Therefore, Jesus said that payment of any kind to hear the gospel or receive kingdom benefits would completely distort the gospel message and was therefore not to be done. Do we need to remember that it would shortly turn the church into a den of thieves? If sharing God’s gospel was a problem in Paul’s day, it is an epidemic in ours because today it’s a multi-billion dollar market. There is serious money to be made, but so much more is at stake than what is merely lawful or ethical. It’s the gospel message that’s at stake. How much time do I and this church spend in prayer and reflection and in demonstrating the necessary concern and care when it comes to managing the use of our church’s financial resources to ensure that we don’t become a “den of thieves”? Explain.

Discuss Pastor Wally’s statement there are no second class disciples.

C.H. Spurgeon pointed out that Jesus told his disciples to “Seek out people fit to be associated with you in holy service. Whatever their circumstances may be, regard chiefly their character. For the best work, look out for the best men. Do not compromise your Master by lodging with persons of evil repute. But do not shift your quarters, or run from one to another, lest you seem mere mendicants (beggars), begging from door to door. Keep to those good people with whom your mission begins. It may be that richer people will turn up; but never forget the worthy men and women who first entertained you.” By what criteria or standard do I determine someone to be “worthy”? Explain.

What happens to a ministry when it forgets the “worthy men and women” and seeks after the “richer people”?

John Gill’s Exposition said that a worthy house means that “...the family, and particularly the master of it, appeared to be civil, courteous, friendly, and hospitable, upon such a salutation, and ready to receive and embrace them, and provide for them.” So, how about my house? Is it a “worthy” house, in this New Testament sense? If an apostle (who would be a perfect stranger to me) came to my home, could he bring “peace” to it? Or would he have to take the peace away with him to some other house that was more worthy to receive it? Explain.

If they or the message presented by the disciples was rejected, they were to shake the dust off their feet, an action that symbolized that the locale was unclean and subject to divine judgment. By rejecting the gospel, such towns, if they remained unrepentant, sealed their doom. What kind of attitude (e.g., anger, meekness, joy, etc.) do I think was attributed to them shaking the dust off their feet and why?

Pastor Wally said that I need to love people so much that they don’t realize that I disagree with them – that they can be offended by God’s truth, but not by my behavior. Sounds good, briefs well, but what does that kind of love actually look and feel like? How do I actually do this?

Pastor Wally also said that in order to establish relationships with those who are lost, I should be looking for “evidence of God working on them.” What are some of the signs (evidence) that might indicate to me that God is working on someone?