

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

When we consider the twelve men whom Jesus chose to be His apostles, we realize that it is God who qualifies people for ministry. Four of the twelve were unschooled fishermen, one was a former tax collector, and one was a former right-wing revolutionary (Simon the Zealot). On the other hand, there is little doubt that these men were chosen because of what God saw in their hearts. Eleven had a sincere love for Jesus, while one possessed the seeds of betrayal.

Jesus sent them out, not just to preach the gospel, but to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matt. 11:7-8). Those supernatural signs would validate their message of repentance. We see the same pattern in the book of Acts. Why then do so many of us believe that God has changed His methods for building His kingdom? We need God's supernatural power just as much as the original apostles did. This is the reason to be baptized in His Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Jesus' instructions to the twelve are certainly applicable to modern ministers whom He also sends. Reading and heeding Matthew 10 would likely do more good for modern Bible school and seminary students than years of sitting in classrooms. This is a message from the Head of the Church!

The apostles were not to go out laden with money, but were to trust God for provision as they went (10:9-10). Theirs was a journey of faith. Tragically, many modern ministers are not only laden with money, but they strangely claim that this is the evidence of their great faith!

The twelve were not to waste their time on unreceptive villages. People who would not repent after hearing their message and seeing their miracles were doomed (10:15). The apostles were to shake the dust off their feet and head towards the next town. If this one spiritual principle was followed by modern ministers, we would not have 95% of the world's preachers endlessly preaching to 5% of the world's people.

Why should anyone hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once? You've probably noticed that most of the reports of modern, genuine miracles are coming from places where everyone hasn't heard the gospel twice. What is the difference? God is trying to reach those people who have never heard, whereas He has shaken the dust off His feet long ago where everyone has already rejected the gospel multiple times.

The twelve were to expect hardship that would test their devotion. Notice that the large majority of what Jesus told them fell under this category (10:16-39), and His words obviously have application to all true disciples (10:24-25). Following Jesus always results in slander, persecution and rejection, at the minimum. It could result in worse--hatred from one's own family, or even martyrdom, which has been experienced by millions of believers throughout the centuries. Jesus never promised exemption from these things. But He did promise that His Spirit would be with us (10:20), that God greatly values us (10:29-31), that we would find our lives in losing them for His sake (10:39), and that we will be rewarded (10:41-42).

Most sobering are Jesus' warnings, not about the world, but about God. We should not fear those who can only kill our bodies; rather, we should fear the One who "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (10:28). Jesus spoke those words to His devoted disciples, one more indication that the modern theory of "once saved, always saved" ought to be questioned.

Jesus had other warnings. If we deny Him before others, He will deny us before His Father (10:33), not exactly another promise of unconditional eternal security. Thus our persecutions serve as tests of our true devotion, and this is why so many true believers have refused to deny Christ in the face of death. If we love mother, father, son, or daughter more than Jesus, we are not worthy of Him (10:37). If we do not take up our cross---an obvious analogy for embracing the suffering that comes with following Christ---we are not worthy of Him (10:38). In light of such words we must ask: Is modern Western Christianity Christianity at all?