

19. The Commission of the Disciples of Jesus

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In January 20, 2001, George W. Bush was sworn in as the 43rd President of the United States after removing the one who disgraced the office of the presidency of the country. In human level, he is the most powerful man in the world due to the massive mighty and sophisticated military power of the United States and the biggest economic power that literally controls the world market.

However, just because he is the president of this country, he cannot fly back and forth as he pleases in his Air Force One and enjoys all of the privileges as the command in chief. That job comes with 24/7 availability to the crises of the nation and all the other responsibilities that normal people like you and me don't care to have.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is actually more difficult than being a president of the United States. Why? Because the president might have to do some difficult jobs during his term, but after that he becomes a civilian, yet get treated as a VIP. But being a disciple of Jesus remains not only physical realm, but also in spiritual realm in readiness of 24/7 and 365 days a year until we get to heaven.

Webster's dictionary defines 'disciple' as the one who embraces and assists in spreading the teachings of another. In Greek word, it is "mathetes" which means 'learner, follower.'

When we become born-again Christians, we have a right and a privilege to be the disciples of Jesus Christ. I didn't say we can be "Apostles" of Jesus, because the office of the Apostle is closed according to Acts and 1 Cor 9. As disciples of Jesus, we must follow what He wants us to do, not what we want.

A. ROLL CALL

Matthew 10:1-4 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now 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 (Nathanael); Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

Jesus did not only call the twelve, but he also gave them power to do what He has called them to do. The same principle holds true today: whom God calls, God equips.

Exception of Judas who betrayed the Lord Jesus, all these Apostle became the significant individuals in Christianity. Their names are written the foundation of the heavenly walls in Revelation 21:14. According to Acts 1:26, these Apostles decided who should fill in the Apostle position where Judas failed and chose Matthias. Obviously, that was not what God had in mind. To their surprise, the persecutor Saul who later became Paul filled in that position.

B. COMMISSION

Matthew 10:5-6 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This is the pattern of the Gospel. It is not about racial prejudice. God's intention was to reach the whole world, but beginning with Israel.

Matthew 10:7-8a And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Jesus was sending His disciples out as His pointmen before He went to those areas. Remember, while Jesus was on the earth, He experienced physical limitations just like us. He only could be only one place at a time.

The disciples both had a message to preach and a power to display as credentials.

C. FREELY RECEIVE, FREELY GIVE

Matthew 10:8b-10 Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

I think some TV Bible teachers who consider themselves as divine healers should consider this verse. We receive the spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit freely, so it should be given to others freely only for the glory of God.

D. THEIR CHOICE FOR THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Matthew 10:11-15 "Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

Did you notice Jesus said, "household is worthy," not "household is rich"? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is blind when it comes to individual financial status. That is the reason why I don't care to know who is giving how much to this church. It is between you and God. Please don't try to let me know to impress me or others. We might be impressed by it, because we are wicked sinners, but God is not.

Some people turn up their noses to the Gospel. They could care less about what God is trying to do for their lives. This is what Jesus said about them in Matthew 7.

Matthew 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

F. PERSECUTION AHEAD

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Jesus told His disciples that they are going to face many steep persecutions including death if they are not careful.

The word 'harmless' literally means 'unmixed,' which may also indicated purity and innocence.

Matthew 10:17-18 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the gentiles.

The persecutions against Christianity and the followers of Jesus Christ have been continuing since Jesus started His public ministry. Currently over 100,000 people die

every year around the world for the sake of their belief in Christ Jesus. This persecution against the believers will be intensified to its maximum during the Tribulation period.

Did you notice what Jesus said, “for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the gentiles”? God is allowing persecutions against Christians to bring testimonies of Jesus Christ to the people who persecute us. Because God loves them and He wants them to come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord, too.

Our loving God doesn't take the death of His children lightly.

Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints.

But He is looking at the bigger picture.

Matthew 10:19-20 But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Jesus' disciples, including us, can have a perfect trust in God at that time, knowing that He will speak through them, even if they are unprepared.

However, this isn't a justification of poor preparation in studying God's Word, but it is a promise of strength and guidance for the persecuted who have an opportunity to testify of Jesus.

Some people say that the Holy Spirit will remind them the Scriptures from the Bible whether they know it or not. Can He do it? Yes. Will He do it? I don't know. It has not happen to me so far. I must study and put the Word in my heart for the Holy Spirit to bring them into remembrance. In my opinion, what they say is nothing more than a lousy excuse not studying the Word.

Matthew 10:21-23 “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Some family could care less while one of their family members believes a big fat Buddha or witchcraft, but once he or she becomes a born-again Christian, it is a completely different story. Why? All of sudden, they are revealed to the truth and the truth makes them to make a choice of following the truth or reject the truth.

Matthew 10:24-25 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!

The disciples should not expect to be treated any better than Jesus was treated. If they called Jesus Himself satan (Beelzebub), how much worse should the disciples of Jesus expect!

Beelzebub is just another name for satan, it was a god's name among Philistine people. It is also known as lord of flies or lord of dung. What a nice attractive god!

Matthew 10:26-27 Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.

Jesus' disciples can have confidence that the truth will prevail, so they should go out and preach it with boldness, despite the danger of persecution. If persecution makes us draw back from speaking and preaching God's Word, in some measure, satan has won a victory.

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

God is the One to fear, not the men who persecute the followers of Jesus. The worst they can do is destroy our bodies, but shrinking back from God's call can have eternal consequences.

Matthew 10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

We don't need to be afraid, because God really does care for us, even down to the last minute detail. None of our trials catches our God off guard.

G. CHOOSE YOUR SIDE

Matthew 10:32-33 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

This is the reason when I give an alter call, I usually don't ask you guys to close your eyes so that no one see who is raising their hands to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

However, these verses don't stop there. It goes beyond that.

For an example, some people who came to our fellowship didn't come back after I taught about what we would do and what we wouldn't do for Halloween. They didn't like the idea of complete ignoring the tradition of Halloween. I even pointed out that celebrating Halloween in one way or another is the same thing as doing it. I don't have a problem them not coming back to this church. This is not the only church around here. There are many good churches in Sahuarita and Green Valley. But the reason why they were leaving is that they were told it is wrong to do what they wanted over the Word of God.

I count five groups of people who come to church:

1) Sold outs: They learn the Word of God, grow in His grace, love and serve Him and His people. Good for you and God bless you!

2) Pew Potatoes: They come to the church to eat spiritual food, but never exercise by serving the body of Christ. They are filled with spiritual knowledge, but do nothing. They just know that their eternal fire insurance has been paid up by Jesus and are happy with that. I say to them, "Get up and serve."

3) Fence Walkers: They know the truth, but they have desires to stay in the world. They long for worldly carnal satisfaction. I don't know where you are fitting in. But if you fit in this category, stop and turn to God. Otherwise, you'll face the consequence of your decision from God.

We may not have an idol statue in our homes, but if we insist our ways over God's way, we are having the very idol God doesn't want us to have. It is the "Self" idol.

You choose this whom you will serve: yourself or God. There is no middle ground.

4) Seekers: If you are looking for the reason for your life or the truth or true love, look no further. You are facing the Answer of your lifelong question. His name is Jesus Christ. He can fill your heart with His love, He can answer all of your questions and more. He will set you free from satan and give you eternal life.

5) Clueless: You didn't mean to come to the church. You were kidnapped, you have been dragged by somebody. You don't care what happens. It is my prayer that you get to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Because He loves you very much.

H. DIVISION WITHIN

Matthew 10:34-39 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Jesus is not against loving one another in the family. But the love for Him should come above all the other love including our own selfish desire.

I. REWARDS FOR THE FAITHFUL

Matthew 10:40-42 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

We can share in the reward of God's servants by supporting them in their work. Even seemingly insignificant works of kindness (a cup of cold water) performed for God's people are meaningful in God's eyes.

J. APPLICATIONS

1) Whom God calls, God equips.

Don't concern about your educational or cultural backgrounds. God provides and equips those whom He calls.

2) Without the Word of God in our hearts, we won't be able to withstand the persecution against our belief.

Let's memorize the Word of God as much as we can. It is our spiritual bread and water to our soul.

3) You decide which side you are going to stay with once and for all: God or everything else.

Don't play game with God. You will get hurt.