

March 9, 2003 by Steve Brandon



The Apostles of Jesus Christ Instructed (Part 1)

Matthew 10:5-10

Jesus told His apostles...

1. Where to Go (verses 5-6)
2. What to Say (verse 7)
3. What to Do (verse 8)
4. What to Bring (verse 9-10)

As all of you know, we are in the process of expositing through the gospel of Matthew. Currently, we find ourselves in Matthew, chapter 10. Last week, we saw Jesus identify His 12 apostles. This morning we find Jesus instructing His 12 apostles before He sends them out to preach. Before we actually get to our text this morning, I thought that it would be best for us to begin with a lesson in Bible interpretation. I want you to think about the book that we are holding in our hands. It is the Word of God. We call it "The Holy Bible", a title which is often found printed on the cover of the book. It consists of 66 different documents, which we refer to as books of the Bible. These documents were written by about 40 different authors. These authors composed their works over a time span of more than 2,000 years. The circumstances and content of these authors are as different as can be. Moses wrote to a roaming band of Hebrew people to give them a law to live by. Isaiah wrote to the mighty nation of Judah, during a period of political crisis. Haggai wrote to a small group of discouraged people. Luke wrote to a man named Theophilus to explain the life of Jesus. Paul wrote to several audiences. He wrote to churches. He wrote to pastors named Timothy and Titus. And he wrote to a slave owner named Philemon. Peter wrote to churches who were scattered as a result of persecution. All of it was written for our instruction. **It was written for you, but it was not written to you.** There is not any of it that we ought to neglect. It is all important, and that is why I have encouraged you to read through the entire Bible this year.

Every part of the Bible does not instruct us the same way. The laws that God gave to Israel do not instruct us in the same way that Paul's exhortations to churches do. The genealogies of the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles do not instruct us the same way that the gospel of John does. There is much of the Bible that we can read as if God wrote it to Rock Valley Bible Church. For example, the epistles of Paul that are directed to churches have particular relevancy to Rock Valley Bible Church. There is much of the Bible that you can read as if God wrote it to you, such as the gospel of John or the book of 1 John. Though the Bible is written for us, it was not written to us. We need to always keep in mind that it was written to somebody else. Perhaps the closest comparison that I can think of is a will. When someone writes a Last Will and Testament, it is for the distribution of one's property to his heirs. It is written for the benefit of those who will inherit the property or money, but it is not written to those people who will inherit these things. It is written to the governing authorities to inform them of your wishes. When we read the Bible, we need to remember that it was written for our benefit, but yet it was written to someone else.

People often get into trouble in Bible interpretation when they read the Bible without taking into account the original audience to whom the words were addressed. Let me illustrate it with this podium that stands here in front of me. Suppose I put my Bible on it and arrange the podium so that the Bible faces the congregation. We could say that this represents the Bible's message, and that it is teaching us directly. But, it was not written to us! It was written to Hebrew people in the desert. It was written to nations that existed 3,000 years ago, but no longer exist today. It was written to churches in the 1st century. It was written to pastors in the 1st century. As a result, we need to read the Bible through the original path it took. Rather than interpreting it directly, let's first allow it to speak to the original hearers. Let's interpret it the way it was understood by the original hearers. When we have done that, then we can apply it to us in our lives today.

Let me demonstrate one instance in which this error of interpretation is quite obvious. The verse we will look at is **2 Chronicles 7:14**. This is a fairly well known verse. Many of you may remember it. I hear it repeated again and again and again and again. This is what it says:

[If] My people, who are called by My name, humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

God spoke this promise to Solomon, concerning His people Israel. It came in response to Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple, which was recently completed. Solomon's prayer covers about all of chapter 6. We do not have time to look at it all of, but we can simply say that it is a prayer of trust in the lovingkindness of the LORD to be faithful to His people Israel.

Solomon's prayer begins with a focus on the lovingkindness of the LORD,

O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no god like Thee in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Thy servants who walk before Thee with all their heart. (2 Chronicles 6:14)

Solomon's prayer ends with a focus on the lovingkindness of the LORD,

O LORD God, do not turn away the face of Thine anointed; remember Thy lovingkindness to Thy servant David. (2

Throughout this entire section we see the pattern of bad things happening to Israel because of her sin. Israel is defeated by her enemies, she experiences famine, and the people are taken captive. Then, Solomon prays that if they are humble and confess their sin, that God would indeed be gracious to them. Typical of this entire section is the prayer of Solomon found in verses 26-27,

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against Thee, and pray toward this place and confess Thy name, and turn from their sin when Thou dost afflict them; then hear Thou in heaven and forgive the sin of Thy servants and Thy people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Thy land, which Thou hast given to Thy people for an inheritance (2 Chronicles 6:26-27).

Now, getting to chapter 7, we find in verse 12 that the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice." The prayer referred to here is what Solomon prayed in chapter 6. In verse 13, we continue the promise that God gave to Solomon, "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people." Why would God do that? Because of the sin of His people. Solomon had just prayed concerning this situation. Solomon had just prayed that if Israel would be humble and confess their sins that God would send rain upon the land. God assures Solomon that He will be faithful in this way.

Now, look again at verse 14,

[If] My people, who are called by My name, humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Who are My people? Israel. We know this because in Solomon's prayer from chapter 6, God is identified as "The God of Israel" (verses 14, 17). In Solomon's prayer from chapter 6, Solomon speaks about "Thy people" and identifies them as "Israel" seven times (verses 21, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32, 33). What does "heal their land" mean? It means that God will send rain (2 Chron. 6:27).

Now let us examine the danger of misinterpretation. What does the church of Jesus Christ frequently do today with this promise given to Israel in the Old Testament? They read it like this,

If My people (interpreted as "the people of the church") who are called by My name, humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways (interpreted as "that's easy enough to do! Let's have some revival prayer meetings, where we as a church confess our sins and seek holiness and righteousness") then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (interpreted as "God will come and heal our land! He will do miraculous things in America! He will bring revival! Abortion will stop! God's Spirit will come upon the land. People will become Christians like never before! It will be great!").

Based on that type of interpretation, the application might end up being something like this: let's have a prayer meeting, and claim this promise for our own, and trust that God will fulfill His promise to do great things for America! I believe that this is **a faulty understanding** of 2 Chron. 7:14.

I believe that the best way to understand the promise of this verse is that it came to Solomon, and that God affirmed the prayer that Solomon prayed in 6:26-27. Further, we need to understand that God promised to act in accordance with His lovingkindness to His people Israel. That is not to say that we cannot apply it at all to the church, because we can indeed apply it. I believe that the best way to apply this verse for us is to observe that the LORD is gracious and compassionate. We can see from this verse that God is faithful to His promises, and that God will look favorably upon the one who humbles himself and confesses his sin before God. And finally, we see that God will bless those who humbly confess their sins. As a church, we can trust God to be consistent in being gracious to those who come to Him in humility and confession. Perhaps God would pour out His Spirit upon us and send a revival again upon America as He did in the 1740's!

After looking at this situation, we should now be able to see the danger of not taking into account the original hearers. By omitting that crucial piece of the interpretation process in this passage, it leads people to believe that God has said that He will do something that He has never promised to do! God never promised to heal everything in sinful America if the church would humble themselves and pray. Oh, He may do so in His grace, but He has never made a promise to do this.

This is just one example of how skipping over the interpretation of a passage and heading directly to application has caused faulty thinking within the church. There are many other such passages we could look at and see the similar error being made. However, time will prohibit us from examining them this morning.

If we fall into this same type of faulty application in our passage in Matthew 10 this morning, we will be greatly led astray. We are going to see that Jesus tells His apostles to do certain things which He is not telling us to do.

Last week, in Matthew 10:1-4, we saw Jesus select His twelve disciples for special duty. He named this group of twelve men as "apostles." The word "apostle" simply means "sent one." The implication is that the apostles were sent with authority. These apostles would go out based upon the authority of Jesus Christ. Before Jesus sent out the twelve apostles, He first instructed them. He gave them implicit directions as to where they were to go, what they were to say, what they were to do, what they were to bring, and how they were to act. He gave them clear directions in regards to their strategy as they enter a city. He told them how to respond when people accepted them. He told them how

to respond when people rejected them.

This morning, we will only have time to look at verses 5 through 10, but I want to read up to verse 15.

Matthew 10:5-15

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it; and abide there until you go away. And as you enter the house, give it your greeting. And if the house is worthy, let your greeting of peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your greeting of peace return to you. And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. Truly 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."

Remember, now, these are instructions given to a specific group of people at a specific time for a specific task. In verse 5 we see Matthew recording for us that it was to "these twelve" that Jesus gave these instructions. It was also "these twelve" that Jesus sent out. Jesus first tells His apostles...

1. Where to Go (verses 5-6).

In verses 5 and 6, Jesus tells His apostles where He is sending them. He says, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Jesus first begins with the negative, "do not go to these people." Then, He gives them the positive, "Go to these people."

a) The Negative

Jesus was telling His apostles for this brief mission not to spend their time among the Gentiles, who were not physical descendants of Abraham. This would have included the Romans, the Greeks, and whatever nationality of people happened to be living in the land of Israel at that time: Medes, Elamites, Egyptians, Libians, Cretans, or Arabs. Jesus was telling His apostles to go to the Jewish cities and villages, and for this brief mission not to go into the cities inhabited by Samaritans either. The Samaritans were those people who were part Jewish and part Gentile. They were the offspring to those who had disobeyed God's continued exhortation given to the people of Israel. If you have been reading through Deuteronomy this week, as a part of our reading schedule, you might remember such a command:

When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and shall clear away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. (Deut. 7:1, 3)

This was repeated throughout the Old Testament. God had instructed the Jews to marry other Jews in order to keep a pure nation. The Samaritans were the product of the disobedience on behalf of some Jews. Jesus said, "do not go to these people."

b) The Positive

Jesus did tell them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The apostles were to go to the covenant people of Israel, who were lost, and as a result, on the way to destruction! The Jews were privileged to be "entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1). They were given "the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12). They were "Beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Rom. 11:28). Despite the great privileges that were theirs, they were a lost and perishing people. Jesus told His apostles to go to these people. Jesus told them to avoid the others and pay attention to this one people group.

Now, how are we to take this command of Jesus to His apostles? Are we to do the same thing that these apostles were to do? Are we to neglect the Gentiles and the Samaritans and only go to the Jews? Of course not. Jesus told these same apostles after His resurrection, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). The gospel is not limited to one nation. When you trace the message of the New Testament through its history, you will discover that these same apostles were led by God to go beyond the Jewish nation to the world. For the first few years after Jesus' resurrection, these apostles remained in Jerusalem. Yet they were sovereignly scattered through the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7). God explicitly taught Peter that "God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:34-35). God explicitly sent Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Rom. 11:13). In many of Paul's epistles, you see Paul addressing this issue of how the Jew and Gentile are now reconciled to God through Christ, becoming "one new man" (Eph. 2:15).

Today, however, we are not to be like the apostles Jesus sent out, who were only to go to one, privileged nation, namely Israel. When Jesus died upon the cross, He specifically purchased "for God with [His] blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). When Jesus came and died, His saving plan was to go forth into "all the nations," that all the nations might be glad and sing for joy (Ps. 67:4). Today, the message of the gospel is for the whole world to hear! Concerning this, we should be glad! The gospel has come to us today, precisely because Jesus later expanded the scope of His disciples. Our response ought to be gladness and boldness. It should be gladness because salvation has come to us who are Gentiles. It should be boldness because the message of the gospel is to go forth to everybody in the world regardless of their ethnic background.

I do not think that I have ever said this before, but I want you not to obey Jesus' command given in verses 5 and 6.

I'm all for ministries that have focused their attention upon the Jewish people. There are many who have done this. I thank the Lord for those ministries. I'm all for ministries that reach out to one people group. There are those who reach out to Muslims, people with AIDS, women contemplating abortion, Chinese people, persecuted Christians, inner city people, homosexuals, and so forth. Oftentimes it helps the effectiveness of the ministry to have such a specific focus. But those ministries do not come about and ought not to derive their justification from this verse in Matthew. This instruction of Jesus can never again be duplicated. The initial announcement of the kingdom was to go "to the Jew first, and then to the Greek."

These words from verses 5 and 6 were spoken to a specific group of people and a specific time for a specific purpose. They do not apply to us today. You want something to apply? How about this: Go to your Gentile neighbor, next door and tell them about Jesus. Bring up spiritual things in your conversations with people.

Not only did Jesus tell these apostles where to go, but He also told them...

2. What to Say (verse 7)

Jesus simply said, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (verse 7). This was to be their sermon. Their message was the same as that of John the Baptist, who said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Their message was the same as Jesus, who said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). These apostles were also to go out and proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (verse 7). Your translation may say, "The kingdom of heaven is near" (NIV). The idea of this word is that something is near or close by or almost come. It can be used of a place. It can be used of a time. It can be used of both. In the garden, Jesus woke up His sleepy disciples and said, "Behold, the hour is at hand (i.e. in time) and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand (i.e. in space)" (Matt. 26:45-46). The hour of Jesus' betrayal was about to become. Judas, who betrayed Him, was about to encounter Jesus. This is the sense that you ought to see when the apostles were preaching, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (in verse 7). The message communicates the nearness of the king -- Jesus is among them. The message communicates the soon establishment of the kingdom -- Jesus is soon to accomplish God's will for Him on earth.

When these apostles were going out and preaching, it was as if they were a publicity team going before an event, to announce what will soon take place. I know the Billy Graham organization employs a similar strategy. Months before a Billy Graham crusade takes place in a city, there is a large effort to distribute information about it through literature, newspaper articles, television commercials, and radio interviews. All of this takes place to stir the interest of the people of a city in the main event that is coming to town! People need to know what is going to take place if they will come to these crusades. This is very similar to what the apostles were to do on this particular mission.

There were times when Jesus did not want to bring attention to Himself. For example, Matthew 8:4 quotes Jesus saying, "See that you tell no one!" Matthew 9:30 quotes Jesus saying, "See here, let no one know about this." But at this point in time, the situation is different. Now was the time for making Jesus' presence known. This was the purpose for their activity at this time! We often have a purpose in doing certain things. For example, President Bush said this week, "Any military activity in Iraq is for the purpose of disarmament." That's the purpose of it. The purpose of the apostles was to make known the nearness of the kingdom. The message the apostles were sent to speak could be paraphrased like this:

People of Israel, you know of the Messianic promises that God has given to us? God told Moses, 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you' (Deut. 18:18). God told David, 'I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever' (2 Sam. 7:12, 13). God told Ethan of His covenant with David, 'I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations' (Ps. 39:3,4). God told Isaiah, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen on in whom My soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations" (Is. 42:1).

Jesus Christ is this person! He is the one of whom Moses was told. He is the one of whom David was told. He is the one of whom Ethan was told. He is the one of whom Isaiah was told. He is here! The Messiah has come! He is the prophet! He is the king! He is God's servant. He has come to establish God's Messianic kingdom! The kingdom is at hand!

Now, let me ask you, "Is this our message today?" Are we to go out and say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"? Not exactly. Jesus is not present with us in the same way that He was present with the apostles. Jesus is not near to us like He was the apostles. Jesus has ascended and is now waiting at the right hand of God, the Father, Almighty until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet, when He will finally consummate His kingdom (1 Cor. 15:25-28). When He will accomplish this, we do not know. Sure, it must be admitted that Jesus said, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). But He is with us today in a different sense than He was when He walked the earth to initiate the Messianic Kingdom.

Our message today is not that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You will never find the apostles preaching this way after Jesus died and rose again. Oh, they never lost sight of the kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke. Paul said that his preaching was all about the kingdom (Acts 20:25). When he was kept under house arrest, he was "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered" (Acts 28:30). The early Christians were saying that there was another king, "King Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

Their message was bigger than "the kingdom of heaven was at hand." They knew that King Jesus had come and dwelt among them (John 1:14). They knew that they beheld His glory (John 1:14). They knew that God had "anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). But they also knew that Jesus was crucified, according to the plan of God to redeem us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). They also knew that "God has made Him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). The apostles went out and proclaimed that "through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

The message of the kingdom today is not that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" The message of the kingdom today is that "The King has come. He has conquered death. He has accomplished redemption! We need to look to Him and believe on Him and wait for Him until He comes to fully establish His kingdom!" Shortly before Jesus entered Jerusalem, there were some who "supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). So, he told them a parable, saying, "A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' And it came about that when he returned, after receiving the kingdom he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done" (Luke 12:12-15). This is the picture of the kingdom that Jesus gave, shortly before He left this earth. He pictured a king going into a foreign land to receive a kingdom. He came and did some initial work. He gave some of his slaves some money to do work in that kingdom. His slaves were to be about the business of prospering in their work. Then, he left them for a while. The citizens hated him and resisted his kingdom. Yet, after a period of time, the king returned and received the kingdom. This is where the kingdom of God stands today. Jesus has come and done some initial work in building His kingdom. There will be a day in which He is coming back to receive it fully. Today, we are to preach about the work that Jesus accomplished when He came the first time, with an eye to His return.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus spoke to His disciples, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). This is our message today. We speak about "repentance for forgiveness" because of the work of our King, Jesus Christ. This week, I was speaking with someone who had no clue about what Christianity was or what it meant to be a Christian. I put it in terms of sins forgiven. I said that "Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul was a murderer and a persecutor of the church and a violent person. Yet, God was gracious to save him. He can save you. You simply need to acknowledge your sin, repent of it, and believe in Jesus. Perhaps this is why Paul summarized his message with the simple phrase, "we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2). We speak about Jesus. We speak about how He was crucified for sins. By repentance and faith, we can know that forgiveness. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4, Paul summarized the gospel that he preached, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to [many]."

Again, if you are looking for something to apply, preach the message of the kingdom: Jesus has come, and will come again. In the mean time, your sins will be forgiven if you repent from them and look to the crucified One who alone can forgive. This is our message today.

Jesus told His apostles where to go and what to say. In verse 8, He tells them...

3. What to Do (verse 8)

Jesus said, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give" (verse 8). Jesus gave these apostles "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (verse 1). Let me ask you, "Are you supposed to do this? Are Christian missionaries today supposed to do this?" I do not believe so. Again, these are specific instructions given to a specific group of people at a specific time for a specific reason. In 2 Cor. 12:12, Paul spoke about "the signs of a true apostle [that] were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles."

I believe that these apostles were given supernatural healing ability for a time to give credibility to their message of the dawning of the Messianic Age. Last week, I quoted Hebrews 2, which explains this. I quote it again this week. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:3-4). These "signs and wonders" of the apostles gave witness to the truthfulness of their message.

I find it interesting that those who claim that we should be doing these signs and wonders today, are not doing these signs and wonders. You do not find the "faith-healers" of today healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, or casting out demons in the same way the apostles did. When Jesus gave them authority to heal the sick, it was for the purpose of healing "every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (verse 1). This is not just sore backs and cancers, which no one can see or verify. These were verifiable diseases! These were people, who could not walk from the time they were born, but who walked by the healing hand of the apostles (Acts 3:2-8). These were paralyzed men, who were enabled to walk (Acts 9:33). The apostles healed paralyzed men!

When Jesus gave them authority to raise the dead, it meant "raising the dead." We know that Peter raised Tabitha, who "fell sick and died" (Acts 9:37). Peter was summoned to heal her (Acts 9:38). We are told the following:

And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that [Tabitha] used to make while she was with them. But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. (Acts 9:39-42).

I do not know many faith healers today who have raised the dead. We can only assume that the apostles actually cured leprosy, for we do not have any explicit examples of this taking place with the apostles. Yet, we know that all who were sick were being healed at the hands of the apostles (Acts 5:16). Philip was casting out many unclean spirits (Acts 8:6-7). They were coming out of people with great shouting. How ever they were afflicting the people, such as paralysis or lameness, they were being healed. Notice that in each of these instances, people were healed instantaneously and totally. There was complete restoration. There were none who were turned away. Faith healers today turn away many who never get "healed." Those that are "healed" are often in the same state as they came a week later.

Again, I will tell you not to obey Jesus' words here. Rather than heal, our job is simply to speak about Jesus. Paul said, "Christ did not send

me to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). When Paul instructed Timothy, he said, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2). This is the job of the pastor and evangelist today. It is to preach. Healing is not in God's program today. Certainly, I believe that God may heal. But we are not called to rely upon a healing ministry to verify our message. The Bible testifies to these miracles, which God worked through Jesus and the apostles. John wrote about the miracles that Jesus did and said that he wrote them down "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). We are called to speak forth the gospel. God has given us His word to depend upon.

We need to apply the principle that Jesus gives at the end of verse 8, "Freely you received, freely give." This describes our mission. God has been most gracious to us. All we can do is be gracious to others in return. These apostles could have easily become rich through their healing ministry. Imagine the doctor who could heal every disease and sickness! His clinic would be flooded. He could charge huge prices and become very rich! So also with us. The gospel came freely to us. We ought to give it freely to others.

Finally, Jesus told His apostles, ...

4. What to Bring (verse 9-10)

I have been on trips and retreats and vacations. Sometimes I will receive in advance a list of all of the things that I should bring in order to make sure that my stay would be enjoyed. I remember going to Israel. We had a list of things that we should bring. We were to bring a water-bottle, since it is very hot there. We were to bring a hat, to protect ourselves from the sun. We were to bring sun-screen. We were to bring certain books that we will read and study during our class. I also remember going on a cruise. We were to bring a camera, bring binoculars so that we could look at the scenery, bring Dramamine in case we get sea-sick, and bring our passport for embarkation to other countries. I remember going on church retreats. We were to bring a pillow and a sleeping bag because the beds are just mattresses, bring a change of clothes that can get really dirty, bring a swimsuit, bring your Bible, bring a notebook and a pen. When Jesus sent His apostles out for this mission, He said to them, "Bring nothing!" He said,

Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. (Matt. 10:9-10).

Now, I ask you, "Are we supposed to do this today? When we send missionaries to the mission field, are they supposed to go without anything in their pockets, but trust God to provide for them? Are they to go out without credit card or a change of clothes?" I say, "No." Jesus gave these words to a specific group of people at a specific time for a specific task. Later, Jesus would instruct His apostles with these words, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one" (Luke 22:35-36).

In the administration of the proclamation of the kingdom of God, things had changed. This was a temporary assignment that Jesus gave to His disciples to His apostles to accomplish the task of making known that the Messiah was on the scene. For this task, they were not to be encumbered. They were to trust God completely for their provision. But later, Jesus would tell His disciples to bring along a money belt and a sword because of the dangers that would await them.

There are certainly principles that we can apply in these situations.

Principle #1

The person who is proclaiming the message of the kingdom should trust God for His provision. These apostles were placed in a situation where they were required to trust God completely. We should emulate this! I know of this personally, as Yvonne and I have forsaken a comfortable lifestyle in DeKalb, and we have come here to Rockford on faith that God would supply all of our needs. He has done so. We trust that He will continue to do so in the future.

Principle #2

The worker is worthy of his support. This concept is repeated throughout the pages of the Bible. Paul said,

Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? ... If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? ... The Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:7, 11, 14) .

God gifts the body of Christ to work as a body. Some are called to be soldiers and some are called to support the army. There is nothing wrong with this set-up. This is how God has established His kingdom to work. "You shall not muzzle the ox while He is threshing" (1 Tim. 5:18). "The laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Tim. 5:18). The one who labors is worthy. The one who is lazy is not worthy. My business is to labor. God's business is to provide. I will trust Him with these things.

Jesus told His apostles where to go, what to say, what to do, and what to bring. He also told them how to act (verses 11-15), and we will look closely at that next week. These instructions that Jesus gave to the apostles are for us. They teach us of Jesus' strategy for bringing His kingdom to earth! They teach us of the unfolding of the messianic kingdom.

Let me make one last observation, and then I will close our time this morning. None of these things that Jesus instructed His apostles to do were easy. This will become more and more apparent as we go through this chapter and see the high call of discipleship to which Jesus calls every believer in Him. Jesus called His apostles to total commitment to follow Him. We are called to the same thing. Is this your heart? Can your heart truly sing the words of the hymn below?

Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of Thy love, At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee; Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King, Always, only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold, Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my love, my God, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be, Ever, only, all for Thee, Ever, only, all for Thee.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 9, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
