

XII.SERVE

109.Make Disciples Read Mt 28:18-20, Mk 16:15-20, Lk 24:46-48, Jn 20:21-23 And Acts 1:8

If Jesus said all these things at once He might have said "I am sending you to be my witnesses, to preach repentance and the good news of the forgiveness of sins, and to make disciples everywhere, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

We studied how we must testify as witnesses to what God has done.

We studied repentance

We studied how Jesus takes away the sins of those who belong to Him and what we must do to belong to Him.

We only touched on the subject of making disciples. So what is discipleship? It is the process by which a completely depraved sinner becomes like Jesus. That is a lot to accomplish and so it involves many things. It therefore follows that it involves many people.

Discipleship begins with salvation. A sinner hears the gospel. They confess, repent and turn away from their sinning. They ask Jesus for forgiveness and salvation. They take Him as their savior and as their lord. It is the resolution of their heart to stop sinning and to begin doing everything that Jesus desires of them. The part that a Christian plays in this process of salvation of another sinner is that of the evangelist. The evangelist tells the sinner what they must do to be saved. The evangelist helps them find salvation, begin a relationship with Jesus and puts them on the path to holiness. This salvation process may take years or it may take minutes. The rest of the journey to holiness is also discipleship. It will take the rest of their lives. WE might call this the discipling of believers.

The new believer needs to take responsibility for their discipleship. They need to be resolved to go forward learning and changing and growing their own personal relationship with Jesus. Those that want to grow grow quickly. Those who do not want to make an effort don't seem to grow at all. Are they really saved? If they take Jesus as savior only and not lord then I think not. For if Jesus was really their lord they would want to learn what He desires and to do it.

The believers around the new believer need to take responsibility for the new believer's discipleship also. In particular the new believer needs someone to shepherd them. The shepherd makes certain the believer is not forgotten, does not fall through the cracks. They check up on them and ask how it is going. The shepherd cares for the believer and prays for the believer. The shepherd does some teaching but more than this he helps the believer apply the truth to his life. The shepherd holds the believer accountable and asks him tough questions. We call the person doing this work the pastor which basically means "shepherd".

Now this pastor must not be confused with the person in the church that holds the title of Pastor, Senior Pastor, Assistant Pastor etc. Not all people holding this title are pastors at all. The true pastor is someone chosen by God and gifted by God to do this very important work. They care certainly, but more than caring they have a vision as to how this work is to be done in the case of every person they shepherd. I think this vision is a part of the spiritual gift that pastoring is.

Another aspect of discipleship is that every disciple of Jesus has their own unique relationship with Him. Relationships are a matter of the heart and two way communication is vital. When we read the scriptures Jesus speaks to us. WE need to have faith that Jesus will speak to us through the scriptures, and while we are reading them. WE should be reading everyday, inviting the Holy Spirit to talk to us and explain the scriptures to us.

If we have a hard time understanding, as everyone does, and need someone to explain it to us we will be in bible study. Every disciple of Jesus should be in a bible study on a weekly basis. This is another instance of where other people have a big impact on our discipleship. These would be the teachers, but also the other people in the class. To me a bible study allows for others besides the teacher to speak. Otherwise it is a lecture. Hopefully your teacher will allow you to ask questions during or after class about what you are reading other than the topic of the class. Everyone needs someone they can take their bible questions to to get help. If you are so knowledgeable that you don't learn anything in a bible study then lead a bible study or help in a bible study for you are probably gifted to do this.

Jesus may also speak to us through other people or directly to us. This may depend on us. I don't think Jesus speaks to people who are not in His word. It works like this. Jesus will rarely speak to someone who does not really want to hear from Him. If we want to hear from Him then we take seriously what He said and we will be studying what He said. If you worship a Jesus that is different from the Jesus in the scriptures, you are not worshiping Jesus.

WE speak to Jesus when we pray. In this case by prayer I mean not just asking Him for things but more than just thinking about Him. WE are consciously aware that He knows what we are thinking as we talk to Him and ask Him questions and tell Him what we think. WE need to spend some time with Him everyday in this way.

When we truly worship Jesus we are talking to Him and He to us through the scriptures, hymns, lessons etc. But if we only show up for church in the body, our mind being elsewhere and not on Him, we are not talking to Him. Every believer needs to worship the Lord weekly and be in His presence as they do this.

We studied the concept of serving. Service is a part of discipleship. We learn to serve. We learn how to serve and how to serve in specific ways. We will learn what our gifts are, and in so doing, learn what work the Lord wants us to do. Even though gifted we will need training in the use of our gifts

This is training that makes sense to me. If I am training you I tell you what you are to do. I tell you why you are to do it that way. I do it while you watch. I answer your questions. I let you do part or all of it while I watch. WE talk about the experience. You do it without my watching. But I don't forget about you. WE continue to talk and sometimes I watch you work. After you are doing the job satisfactorily we begin to talk about how you would train someone else. For you don't know a thing until you can explain it a few different ways to someone else. And I have not properly trained you if you can't train someone else. Some service can not be done while someone watches. In that case there has to be a lot more talking and openness.

110.Go Read Mt 28:16-20

Is this my job? What if I am not a teacher? The problem is that the teachers can't do this job neither. This calls for a team of people.

Here is the problem: Jesus did not command us, "teaching them what my commandments are", or "teaching them to understand my commandments", or "teaching them how to apply my commandments to their lives", or "teaching them that they should obey my commandments", or "teaching them how to obey my commandments", or "teaching them to obey some of what I commanded".

We are to be teaching them **TO** everything Jesus commanded. This includes all of the above and more besides.

The teachers can teach the disciples that they should obey and why, what the commandments are, help the disciples understand them, help them apply them in a general sense, and perhaps teach them how they can obey. The typical teacher will have some struggles understanding and helping others to learn

the principles and how to apply them. But teachers can always learn from other teachers. And we who teach, when it seems so difficult to figure out how to do it, need to remember that Jesus said, "I am with you to the end of the age." We are not alone when we teach. WE need to have faith and believe that Jesus is with us. We need to learn to recognize His voice when He speaks up in a class or Bible study or small group. We need to learn that He can speak through anyone's mouth. But teaching them **TO** is really difficult.

The teachers can't do this really. This requires conviction. If a Jesus follower is being disciplined, if he has accountability relationships, if someone is working to pastor and shepherd him (the same thing really): there will be opportunities for these disciplers to teach him **TO** obey. But all the disciples of Jesus have occasional opportunities to encourage the Christians around them to know and practice what Jesus commanded by word, and particularly by example.

It is very thought provoking to hear the testimony of someone who has been convicted to obey something. They have wrestled to understand it and apply it, they have questioned whether they must, and God has spoken to them and convicted them that they, in fact, must do this next. And here I sit having never given a serious thought to obeying this command. God has told them to do this and I am clueless. It is pretty humbling. God has not brought me to this point yet. He working to teach me to obey Him or believe Him in some yet more basic principle. I walk away thinking these people are crazy or else they are holier than I am. If they are focused on the very words of Jesus, crazy is not probable. In a healthy church family, people do share their spiritual struggles with others and the whole body can learn from their example.

Ultimately it is the work of the Holy Spirit to speak to a disciple's heart and convict them of what they need to begin to do. For our part we need to be praying for those we disciple, that the Holy Spirit will do just that in them.

For those who teach or not, we need to consider whether we have any concern for the spiritual well being and growth of our brothers and sisters in Jesus. And do we want them to be concerned for ours. Or do we think as Cain said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" My we remember what Jesus said of His family, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my sister and brother and mother." When we obey what Jesus commanded we are His family.

Compared to "...teaching them to obey..." "...baptizing them..." is relatively easy. People having been ordained by one denomination or another receive some training in this, I imagine. Usually some one of them will be available to baptize a new believer. But, if for some reason they are not...

It would be a shame that we were not obedient to God's command because we were taught that only clergy can do this. The clergy, denomination, the congregation, the universal church can not save you. Only Jesus can. Do what He commands and forsake all others, including the Christians, if you must.

John Wesley struggled with this issue. As an ordained priest of the Church of England he was authorized to baptize. But besides baptism the thousands being saved needed pastors and teachers, and people who themselves could baptize others. Otherwise only the few ordained clergy in the revival could baptize. Perhaps many would not be baptized because there were so few clergy.

Eventually, in America first Wesley had to concede that they would have to appoint their own bishops so that they could ordain clergy so that the masses everywhere could be baptized.

Certainly we should be reluctant. But if there is no other way then we the followers of Jesus need baptize others.

111. Serve, Read Mk 10:35-45, Mt 20:20-28, Mk 9:33-37, Lk 9:46-48

These passages are nearly identical. I am of the opinion that Mark was written first. Then came

Mathew. Mathew has a lot of Mark in identical or at least similar words and details. I think Mark was written before Mathew because why would anyone write less than what was written before. In that case nothing has been added.

Luke clearly says that others have written before him but that he wanted to make an orderly account. What was so disorderly about Mark and Mathew? It is this: Mathew does not follow Mark's chronology. Having read both one might ask, "which way did it happen?" I think Luke discovered that Mark was more faithful to the actual order of events. Luke's gospel follows the same chronology as does Mark.

Luke also adds a lot of information missing from Mathew and from Mark. At the same time Luke abbreviates some things like the beatitudes and the Lord's prayer, why? I assume that either the people Luke interviewed did not recollect all the detail that Mathew has or that Luke calculates that why repeat to the same detail what has been written before. I suspect the former is the case. Repeating part of something seems inferior to repeating all of it or none.

I can remember children trying this trick "Would you do something for me?" If you say yes they consider you bound to do whatever it is. Jesus is not taken in. Jesus will not decide whether He will do this thing until He knows what it is. Some Christians believe that if you have enough faith you can ask for anything and it will be done. And not without reason. Scripture does say that. See Mt 7:7, 21:22. But here Jesus does not grant what has been asked. Why not? Because it is not in God's will to do this thing. I have to conclude that all the faith and belief possible will not force God to do what He has decided not to. God is sovereign. He is the only one anywhere who can not be made to do anything He has chosen not to do.

Jesus asks the brothers if they can suffer what He must suffer. But even after this Jesus says that what they ask will go to those for whom the Father has prepared them. It is as if Jesus does not decide who sits next to Him in His kingdom. His Father does. To me the scriptures are clear that Jesus submits to the Father's authority. All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to Jesus. See Mt 28:18. But Jesus in many places seems to indicate the Father has supreme authority. See Mt 10:32, 11:27, 12:50, 13:43, 16:27, 23:9, 26:29, 28:19, Jn 3:35, 6:27, 6:37, 6:44, 8:26, 8:28, 8:54, 14:13, 15:15, 17:1-2, 20:17.

In other places Jesus more clearly submits to the Father's authority. See Mt 10:32, 26:39, 24:36, Lk 22:29, Jn 5:19, 8:28, 8:49, 10:18, 10:25, 10:29, 10:36-37, 11:41, 12:27, 12:49-50, 14:16, 14:28, 14:31, 15:10. It has been said that Jesus is subordinate to the Father only when He lived as a man on Earth. But, this passage seems to indicate that the father's supreme authority extends to heaven. The simple fact is Jesus calls His Father "Father" Knowing what we know of the culture fathers are the authority.

All this is beside the point. This passage is about being a servant. It is a paradox. The greatest follower of Jesus is the greatest servant of others. This turns the concept of greatness on its head. We would expect to treat someone who is great as if they were great. We would treat them great.

The reason it turns our way of thinking on its head is that it reverses the cause and effect of servanthood and greatness. Our culture thinks that a person of greatness should be served. Jesus is saying being a servant to others is what makes someone great. Servanthood confers greatness.

Here's a challenge. Do we look up to people who are servants of others more than we look up to other people who are powerful, charismatic, wealthy, have a successful career or family life, etc. Why not?

At some point we learn that some things we do well because God has given us a talent of a spiritual gift. It is true that some people make more of their potential than others. And of course this takes work. But, being a servant is not a matter of talent or giftedness at all. It is all about love and humility. It is all about the relative value you put on others versus yourself. It is about values not gifting.

Ultimately we need to humble ourselves before God who gave us everything we have. Furthermore, God sees all humanity as brothers and sisters. He must be disappointed when we look down on each other. He has given some gifts to one person and other gifts to another. The idea of one person looking down on another because they have one set of gifts and not another must seem strange and disappointing to God who decided what gifts each one received. Judging someone based on their talents and gifts, including how industrious they are, is judging God who gave them their gifts.

Servant-hood requires us to put someone else's interest before our own. It is self sacrificing. This requires humility and effort. Jesus was perfect but He put my interest before His when He submitted to dying on the cross for me. His prayers in the garden indicate that it was a great sacrifice in His view. He was afraid, but He went through with it because it was God's will.

112. Serve. Don't focus on greatness. Read Jn 13:1-17

Human nature being what it is Jesus knew He would have to convey His message in unmistakable fashion. Nothing is more powerful than a personnel object lesson. Jesus the Son of God washes the disciples feet. This was the work of a slave.

Jesus had said the greatest would be a servant of the others. The Son of God Himself washed His people's feet. There are two perspectives on this and they are both useful.

If you want to be great wash the feet of others. Clean up their messes, figuratively and literally. But we are not talking about doing this once. We are talking about doing this all the time. The job of the great is to wash feet. Being great means taking on the job of washing feet. If this is not what you want to do but you want to be thought of as great, give up. You do not have greatness in you. You have pride. For greatness is humility. If you are thinking you want to be great so as to get recognition, you have pride. Give up. You do not have greatness in you. You will practice enough humility to get recognition. Then you will stop being humble. Greatness is not a means to an end. Greatness is the result of love and humility. Seeing the welfare, interests and comfort of others as equal to your own. And on occasion, more important than your own so as to convey love.

The other perspective is this: greatness is about recognizing others. When you consider your family, coworkers, acquaintances, and particularly your church family, who serves? The one who serves the most is the greatest. That is the one to take as an example. Take more seriously the opinion of the one who serves. Consider less the one who does not serve. Never consider the greatness of yourself. Assume you have none. Consider the greatness of others.

113. Make a big impact and how to do it. Read Mt 5:13-16, also Mk 9:50, Lk 14:34-35.

I have heard it said that in ancient times they flavored food with something that was like salt but not sodium chloride. This is a good thing because I can't think of a way in which sodium chloride can lose its taste. Apparently this salt substitute could lose its saltiness at which point it was useless.

To this Matthew passage we could add Mt 13:31-33.

What does salt, a lamp, the mustard seed, yeast, and a city on a hill, have in common. This reminds me of those aptitude tests. OK time is up! The answer could also be this. All these things are noticed: salt in your food, a city on a hill although far away, yeast in the dough, a mustard plant in the garden, a lamp on the stand. Another possibility is that they are small but produce big impact big impact. This is questionable in the case of the city.

Who was Jesus talking to? His disciples. See v 1. He wants His disciples to be noticed. He wants them to produce a big impact.

The last verse of Mark speaks of how Jesus confirmed the words of His disciples with signs. Why do

this? So that they would be believed. So that many people all over the Earth might believe and join His kingdom.

So what are we to do with this? We are to have a big impact. How are we to accomplish this? By using our spiritual gifts.

Three thousand became believers in a single day after the demonstration of two spiritual . The first was speaking in tongues, the second preaching. The one confirmed the other. Neither by itself would have done this.

Most Christians are ignorant about spiritual gifts. Paul starts 1 Corinthians 12 with these words: "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant." Neither do I. Read all of this chapter, Romans ch 12 and Ephesians ch 4. This is a start.

Consider Paul's analogy of the body. When the many parts, organs, structures, systems in the body work and work together the body is healthy and can get something accomplished. No single organ in the body can accomplish anything from mowing the lawn to doing the taxes.

If your church makes an effort to understand the various gifts and what they are supposed to do, as well as identifying what gifts each person has, and if all the people in the church begin to use all their gifts in unity of purpose, your church will accomplish the work Jesus has for it to do.

Consider a football team. Clearly the various players have different gifts. The wide receiver is fast. The line man is hard hitting. The quality of the various talents the players have is important, but not as important as their determination to work together. The greatest receiver in the world is useless if he refuses to get off the bench and into the game. He is also nearly useless, useless, or even a liability if he insists on running a certain play while the rest of the team. He won't be useless but will certainly be a waste of talent if he insists on playing as a lineman. Worse yet, his being a lineman may keep a much better lineman out of the game.

If your church were a football team how well would it score points?

114. Serve, using what God has given you. Read Mt 25:14-30, Lk 19:11-27

In Lk 19 we have a very similar parable but Mt makes a point that Lk does not. What happens to the servant who did not use what he had as his master had commanded?

What do the things in the parable represent? The man who journeyed has the authority. He must be God. The servants belong to the man. They must be God's people. The reckoning must represent the last judgment when both rewards and punishment are handed out. Therefore the journey represents a great span of time from when we came to belong to Jesus until He returns. A talent is a unit of weight used to measure large amounts of money. The talent was used to measure silver. A talent was 75 pounds of silver. Think of a talent as about \$ 10,000. Therefore what must the talents represent?

What has God given us from the time we belonged to Him? Ultimately God is the source of everything we are and have. When we first came to belong to Jesus He gave us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brought us spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts. Jesus does not talk of these things as such. Read Galatians 5:13-26. The fruit of the Spirit are Christian virtues, expressions of love. Will Jesus ask us how we used the fruit of the Spirit, the virtues that the Spirit brought us. How does one use a virtue? One man does what He can to love everyone and expresses love through righteous and virtuous behavior. Another man refuses to do these things. Which man has put the fruit of the Spirit to work? Obviously the first. We use the fruit of the Spirit when our behavior, words, thought, and attitudes that reflect the Christian virtues.

Read First Corinthians ch 12. Paul does not want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. In verses 4 through 7 we have some synonyms for spiritual gifts. These are service, working, and manifestations of

the Spirit. In verses 8 through 10 Paul lists several of the spiritual gifts. These are messages of wisdom, messages of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues. In verse 28 he provides another list: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

Read Romans 12. Here is another list of gifts: prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, and mercy.

Read Ephesians 4. Here is another list of gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

The faithful servants in the parable put to work the money the master gave them. We need to put to work the gifts the Master gave us. That means work for us. First we must identify what gifts we have. The most speedy method is to do a spiritual gifts self evaluation. These are questionnaires that help us figure this out. Perhaps they can help us figure out what our gifts are. On line I found these web sites:

[Http://old.ewehope.org/spiritualgifts/evaluation.php](http://old.ewehope.org/spiritualgifts/evaluation.php)

[Http://mealgroups.dalldorf.com/gifts/](http://mealgroups.dalldorf.com/gifts/)

[Http://www.communitycc.com/resources/sp_gifts.shtml](http://www.communitycc.com/resources/sp_gifts.shtml)

[Http://www.scofield.org/images/stories/pdf_documents/spiritual_gifts_evaluation.pdf](http://www.scofield.org/images/stories/pdf_documents/spiritual_gifts_evaluation.pdf)

[Http://www.intimacywithgod.com/gifts.pdf](http://www.intimacywithgod.com/gifts.pdf)

I have not done any of these. At a glance they looked legitimate.

Ultimately the people of Jesus around us amongst whom we have served know how we are gifted. From their perspective it seems that God has served them through us in specific ways. These specific ways are our spiritual gifts. If we served a lot in many ways without consideration for possible failure and if people spoke up whenever they felt served, perhaps we would never need the evaluation questionnaires, but that is not the case.

The way we use the spiritual gifts is somewhat more straight forward. The gift of teaching is used by teaching the things of God. We prepare by reading and studying the words of God as well as learning effective ways to communicate to different kinds of people with different learning styles.

Just as we view people in business, entrepreneurs, brokers, salesman etc as people who work hard, not physically but mentally, people who are always looking for new ideas, people who are opportunistic and above all motivated. We also must be motivated to build the kingdom of God by always looking for opportunities to do what we can, particularly using our gifts. The first step in using our gifts is having a heart thankful for what God through Jesus has done for us. So thankful and loving that we want everyone to receive what we have. Wanting for others to have this so much that we are motivated to do whatever we must to see them get it. Motivated enough so that we want to know what Jesus wants us to do. What Jesus wants us to do is use the gifts He gave us. As we prove faithful in using what we are given He gives us more to use that we might achieve more building His kingdom in the hearts of people.

Does God expect us to use everything He gave us? Yes. But He will ask us specifically if we used the powerful things He gave us. For the spiritual gifts are power. They are the power of God set aside to be unleashed when we do the work He gave us. What is the work He gave us? The work is the areas of service related to the gifts we have received. The gifts are our work. The work is our gifts.

If we don't prepare and use our gifts we must not care what Jesus wants us to do. Jesus will take away

the gifts and the work He had for us and give it to someone faithful. If we don't care about using our gifts we are not thankful, loving, repentant or obedient. If we are not obedient and repentant we don't belong to Jesus. If we don't belong to Him we will be condemned. Like the wicked, lazy and worthless servant in the parable.

115. Be Smart as You Serve. Read Lk 9:1-6, 10:1-12, 16-20, Mt 10:5-16, Mk 6:7-11

Jesus gives general and specific instructions. First the general instruction, be shrewd and be innocent. Be innocent might mean be sinless before the people. This is good for two reasons. People will have reason enough to cause trouble for you in as much as they are in rebellion against God. Don't give them an additional reason to dislike you or the means to accuse you. Be perfect. It is hardest to be righteous with family members or coworkers. These people see you when you have to satisfy multiple demands and priorities. They see you when you are squeezed. But with these strangers before whom Jesus was sending the apostles there are few demands. They should be able to be near perfect if they watch themselves.

Secondly, right or wrong, the message will be judged by the character of the messenger. It is hard enough to find salvation. Don't make it harder by being more of an obstacle than is inevitable.

Be shrewd means be smart. Be street wise. Don't let yourselves be abused or discredited. And don't let the message be discredited. Think things through. Pay attention to the situation and what is happening. Scrutinize the people amongst whom you are working. Don't be anyone's fool. Paul comes to mind as one who lived this advice as well as demonstrating it in his messages. See 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." By all means, being smart, being righteous, save some.

Take no purse or bag, or spare sandals. If you have nothing to take thieves will leave you alone. Greet no one on the road. I think this is to avoid being abused by those who reject the truth. Share the truth in a Town where you have the protection of the Law against violence. Also you have work to do so get to where you are sent. You are on a mission so there is no time for chat.

Bless the house where you are invited to stay. They are doing you and the gospel a service. Don't worry whether they deserve it or not. God is the judge. Don't scrutinize the food or drink. Just eat and drink it. You are not there to judge the food. Don't pay for what they put before you for you are doing them a service also. Don't move from house to house otherwise the speculations about why you moved will distract and detract from your message. You are not there to judge the households.

Heal the sick. This is God's mercy and God's confirmation that you bear the truth. Tell them that the Kingdom of God is near. Perhaps someone will ask about how to enter the kingdom.

I wish that many of us had the gift of healing. This plus the other demonstrative gifts confirm that we have the truth and that our message is approved by God. It does not mean we are perfect or good or even saved.

To sum it all up. You are there to do the work of God. Do it the best you can using all your resources and sense. Do everything to support the message and nothing to detract from it.

116. If persecuted flee. See Mt 10:23, Lk 21:20-21, Mk 13:14-20.

God may want you to stand your ground and die as a witness. Perhaps He wants you to flee and spread the Gospel elsewhere. Do whatever He tells you. Don't assume you must stay and die or that you must flee. After Stephen was killed there was a persecution, see Acts 8:1-4. Scripture does not judge those who stayed or those who fled.

Perhaps God can achieve more through one martyr than through a bunch. It would be easier to die as

group. One person could give in to the temptation to disown Jesus and live. Perhaps no believer would ever know. God may choose just a few to be martyrs and for the others to flee.

117. Serve When Called. Read Lk 5:1-11

The call of the first disciples is important in all the gospels. John has a different bunch as being called first and in a different way and to a different calling. He records the calling of the first disciples whereas the other gospels are really recording the call of the first apostles.

Luke gives us the most detail. Here Jesus performs a miracle and the people are duly impressed. Peter takes it to the next level and realizes that Jesus must be from God in some way. He then continues on to thought, and not a new thought, that he is not that good. In fact he would have Jesus depart. I don't think that Peter thought that he would contaminate Jesus somehow. I think he was conscious of being evil in the presence of God. This is not a good place to be and needs to be fixed fast. The best description of evil confronted by God is Mt 28:1-4. The guards were terrorized and yet had nothing to fear from God, yet. Jesus reassures Peter and calls Him to His service. For God had chosen these men to serve God and all of humanity by doing the work that He gave them. As time would prove they were not perfect but they did the job. It is not our perfection that makes us usable. Nor is it our talents and gifts. It is our availability and our willingness to humbly submit, make sacrifices, and endure hardships. God can provide the perfection the gifts and talents, only we can provide the willingness.

I know a few Christians who want to do God's work. God reveals to most of them what His work is. Many times it is related to the gifts that they have learned, Through other people, that they have. I know other Christians who say they want to do God's work but these seem to be fleeting sentiments. Usually they are wrapped up in their problems, ambitions, and desires. Too wrapped up, to be consistently willing to work. Most Christians I know seem to have no expressed or real interest in doing God's work. Some are also wrapped up in their problems, ambitions, and desires. Others seem to have this attitude of the worthless servant in the parable of the pounds. They consider God harsh and unfair and do not want to serve Him they do not really submit to Him, His will, or His righteousness. At some point He disappointed them by not doing as they thought He should have, so they will not serve Him. It is strange to think that There are many people in the churches who do the occasional good deed, never affirm the scriptures, and hold a deep seated resentment against God. Yet they are there regularly in His church. I wonder why. Perhaps He has not yet let go of them.

Suppose you really were righteous in all you did and of course God is righteous in all He did, but you and He don't agree on what righteousness is. What reasons might There be to abandon your own righteousness and submit to His. First, He made the world and made you. That gives Him an authority that you do not have. That is authority over you, but also the world and particularly other people. What good does it do these other people to pursue a righteousness of yours when it is not to you but to Him they will have to give an account. Second, He will judge. If you have any sense of self preservation you would do well to submit. Also if you have any love for other people, and you must if you are in fact righteous, you will see that they will be better off submitting to His will rather than yours. Third, He knows everything and is all powerful. This means He has the power and knowledge to see that His righteousness is executed throughout all creation. Fourth, He has been doing what is right a lot longer and will continue doing so after you are gone. If you really were righteous these reasons would compel you to be on His side, and not expect Him to be on yours.

But I don't think that it is a sense of self righteousness that keeps people from submitting to God so much as a desire to be free of anyone's authority. The devil himself thinks himself righteous and clearly will not submit to God's authority. When we are this way we are like him.

Must we give up our desires and ambitions to answer God's call and do His work? Well yes, Look at what Jesus gave up for you. Fair is fair. To be saved you must belong to Him belonging to Him you

must do as He did.

What about my problems? Let Him take away your problems by giving your problems to Him Stop fighting, rehearsing, recalling, reacting to your problems. Just give them to Him and do everything He tells you to.

The most intense joy I have experienced in this life is when I am doing God's work and His will and with His power working through me, and when I can see the effect it has. Don't miss out on this.

Understand how the world will receive you and be careful. Read See Mt 10:16-33 and Lk 12:8-12

The passage in Mt follows after the instructions Jesus gives to the Twelve when He sent them out. I think these instructions in ch 10 are about two different missions. The first is the mission of the Twelve when Jesus sent them out. The second is the great commission when Jesus sent them out after the resurrection. The persecution described does not happen during the first mission. But later things change. See Lk 22:35-38. It is during the great commission that these things will take place. And this is the time in which we live so they apply to us.

Be shrewd and be innocent. This we discussed before. Much of this is warning of what will happen. So we need to be careful but we also need to be mentally and emotionally prepared. We must not be surprised.

The practical advice in the passage begins with the advice not to prepare your words. The Holy Spirit intends to speak through you. First of all we need to be prepared to have the Holy Spirit speak through us. For those with the speaking type of spiritual gifts we will have already experienced This. For others it will be like this: you will have a thought of The truth and will start speaking. You will not be conscious of choosing your words, and you will wonder where these words come from. They come from the Holy Spirit. Let them come and let them out.

Second you will be persecuted for what God is saying through you. I heard the story of a Christian missionary in Africa who was beaten. While this was taking place Jesus said to her "It is me they are beating". So prepare yourself to be beaten or worse for Jesus. Belonging to Jesus is a package deal. We share in His glory in His kingdom. We may have to share in His suffering here. He suffered for us. We can suffer for Him It will not seem a small thing to us at the time. Neither will it to Jesus. See Mk 16:19 and Acts 7:56. How can it be that Jesus sits at the right hand of God yet stands . He sits at the right hand of God. He stood to honor Stephen who was about to suffer and die for Him May we do as well as Stephen did.