

FBC POWELL, 10-29-17 PM NOTES
"Ambassadors of the King"
Luke 9:1-9
32 in Series, "The Gospel According to Luke"

2 Corinthians 5:20b "...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

"An ambassador is a diplomatic official of the highest rank sent by one country as its long-term representative to another."

Philippians 3:20 "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

I. The Ambassador's Power and Authority (vv. 1-2)

Hebrews 13:5b "...I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

A. Power and Authority Before the Canon of the New Testament Was Established

Canon—the accepted standard

B. The Determination of the Canon

1 Thessalonians 5:27 (NKJV) "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren."

In the 4th Century in two councils (Hippo in 393 AD and Carthage in 397 AD) the 27 books of the New Testament we have today were determined to make up the New Testament canon.

5 questions likely asked of the potential books in the two church councils:

- 1) Is it authoritative?
- 2) Is it prophetic (was it written by a man of God)?
- 3) Is it authentic?
- 4) Is it dynamic (does it come with the life-changing power of God)?
- 5) Was it received, collected, read, and used by the people of God?

The councils did not determine what was inspired, they recognized what was inspired.

C. After the Canon of the New Testament Was Established

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV) "Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

It is infinitely better to have the Word of God rather to not have the Word of God and miracles.

II. The Ambassador's Trust (v. 3)

Luke 22:35-36 "And He said to them, '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.'"

III. The Ambassador's Contentment (v. 4)

Philippians 4:11-12 "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need."

"From no quarter has Christianity received such damage as it has from the hands of its own teachers. At no point has its teachers erred so much, and so often, as in the matter of personal worldliness and luxury of life. They have often destroyed by their daily lives, the whole work of their lips. They have given occasion to the enemies of religion, to say that they love ease and money, and good things, far more than souls. From such ministers may we pray daily that the church may be delivered! They are a living stumbling block in the way to heaven."
—Dr. J. C. Ryle

IV. The Ambassador's Discernment (vv. 5-9)

Matthew 10:14-15 "Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off 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."

Sodom Had No Bible—Leonard Ravenhill

Luke 13:31 "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You."

Luke 9:23-24 "And He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.'"

Sermon 32: Ambassadors of the King

Luke 9:1-9

In my opinion, the richest chapter in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 5. In 2 Corinthians 5:20b we read, "...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

What is an *ambassador*? The Greek word means "to act as a representative." That is basically the same meaning as the English word, "ambassador." What does an ambassador do? One dictionary says: "An ambassador is a diplomatic official of the highest rank sent by one country as its long-term representative to another." What a great picture of our task here on earth. Philippians 3:20 says, "For

our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Do you see how well this analogy fits? We are citizens of Heaven, but we are left here on planet earth, not to become wealthy or famous, but to be an Ambassador for our King – Jesus Christ.

When we come to Luke 9, our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, is about at the half-way point of His three-year public ministry. The cross looms about eighteen months in the future. To this point, Jesus has done most, if not all, of the teaching and miracles. In Luke 9:12 we see Him begin to multiply His ministry by using the twelve men called apostles. What we see is something like an internship. He gives them instructions and sends them out and then evaluates how well they did when they return. What we will see as we examine the rest of Luke and then read the first two chapters of Acts (which Luke also wrote), is that even after spending three years night and day with Jesus and the last eighteen months of that three years ministering alongside Him, they still failed Him as He headed for the cross. Even Peter, a brave man according to the flesh, denied Jesus three times. Here is what we must learn from their failure. The only way that we can be faithful and obedient to Him is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, Peter as well as the rest of the apostles (minus Judas) never denied Him again. Tradition tells us that every one of the apostles was martyred except John and that he was exiled to the Island of Patmos.

In Luke 9:1-9 we are going to examine what Jesus gave His disciples when He sent them out on their own for the first time. We are going to take a side trail and examine why we do not see the results today that they saw then. That will involve what it means to have the completed Word of God. We will also look at how the content of what we know as the New Testament came to be accepted by the church.

I. The Ambassador’s Power and Authority (v. 1-2)

Before we look at the power and authority Jesus gave to His disciples, let’s make sure that we clearly understand what they had the power and authority to proclaim. They were to proclaim the kingdom of God (v. 2). The Kingdom of God refers to His rule, reign, and authority. Because God the Son was at hand, wherever He went, the kingdom was at hand. Even though there will be an earthly manifestation of a physical kingdom one day (often called the Millennial Kingdom), anytime, anywhere a person repents of sin and in humility places their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, they have the Kingdom of God within them and they have become a Kingdom citizen with a new citizenship. There are only two kingdoms – the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. You can’t have dual citizenship! Jesus sent out His apostles to proclaim His Kingdom, His rule and reign. When we pray the model prayer that Jesus gave His disciples – “Your Kingdom come, your will be done” – we are praying for lost people to come out of the kingdoms of this world and come in surrender to Christ and become a part of His kingdom.

Notice what Jesus gave them to equip them to accomplish the task. Luke 9:1 says that He “gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.” In kingdom work, power and authority go together. The Greek word translated “authority” in the New Testament is the official legal right to act, control, or command. Power speaks of ability. Authority without power is ineffective. Christ has all authority and all power! To put it another way, power is the capacity, the energy, the ability to accomplish a task, and authority is the right to use power. Jesus gave the apostles power and authority.

What we are going to do next may seem like we are going in a totally random direction, but stay with me and you will see how it all fits together. Do we today, who are in Christ, have power and authority like these apostles did? The answer is “yes” and “no.” In some ways we actually have more than they did. They had the bodily presence of Christ beside them and here He gives them the temporary use of His power. On the other hand, believers in Christ after the day of Pentecost have the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit) dwelling in them and have His promise in Hebrews 13:5b: “... I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.” However, we don’t have the power to heal all the sick and or many of the

other miracles we see in the book of Acts. To understand why we don't have that same power in ourselves today, we need to understand some things about the New Testament canon.

A. Power and Authority Before the Canon of the New Testament Was Established

When I speak of the "canon" I am not referring to a weapon of war that used to fire exploding balls at the enemy or today fires powerful shells at the enemy. The word "canon" in this context means "the accepted standard." When "standard" is used in context of the Scriptures, it is referring to the books of the Bible that are accepted as being inspired and thus authoritative. In the period of time that there was no New Testament canon, authority and power was demonstrated by supernatural acts (miracles) by believers.

The book of Acts is filled with miracles. There were people raised from the dead, multitudes were supernaturally healed, people were enabled to speak in a language they had never learned, Paul was bitten by a deadly snake and showed no effects. When people saw these supernatural acts, they recognized the authority and power of the Christians. Why don't we see that today? Some say that it is because we don't have the faith they did. I don't believe that is true. Some of the godliest people who have ever lived are alive today and they don't see these miracles. I realize that there are hucksters out there claiming they have the power to heal, but they are as phony as a \$3 bill. Some say they can even raise the dead by their faith. Where is the proof – proof like Lazarus and his open life after his resurrection?

Allow me to be crystal clear that I believe God can do any miracle He pleases – heal the sick, raise the dead, or any other miracle He chooses to do. However, miracles are not something that we can claim and then beat ourselves up when the miracle doesn't happen because we didn't have enough faith.

Before the powerful Word of God that we call *The New Testament* was written and distributed, the believer's authority was validated by acts of power as in the book of Acts.

B. The Determination of the Canon

How were the books that are inspired determined? In this message, we are going to focus on the New Testament. Jesus and the New Testament writers had the same Old Testament we have. Some of the books were combined and they weren't in the same arrangement, but it was the same content. The Jews agreed that the canon of the Old Testament closed about 400 BC with the prophesy of Malachi. There was a council that met in Jamnia in AD 95 but they only ratified what the Jews had accepted as the canon for about 500 years. There is almost no controversy today among believing Bible scholars that the Old Testament books are inspired by God. How about the New Testament?

Jesus commissioned the disciples to pass on the truth He had taught them (John 14:25-26). Most of the New Testament books were written during the last half of the first century. Some were written to individuals, some to a wider audience (like 1 Peter), but most were written to local churches. Since there was a large distance barrier, all the believers didn't have all the books for quite some time. As long as the apostles were alive, things could be checked out through them. They were eye-witnesses. Even before all the books were written the churches recognized the books that were authoritative, primarily because they were written by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle. The authoritative books began to be circulated among the churches. In 1 Thessalonians 5:27 (NKJV) Paul admonished the Christians, "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren."

By the end of the first century all twenty-seven books of the New Testament in our present canon were written and received by the churches. One of the reasons we know this is that in the generation following the apostles, every book of the New Testament was quoted by one of church Fathers as authoritative. In the 4th Century in two councils (Hippo in 393 AD and Carthage in 397 AD) the twenty-seven books of the New Testament that we have today were determined to make up the New Testament canon. In those councils there were probably five questions asked of the potential books.

[McDowell page 39]

1) Is it authoritative? 2) Is it prophetic (was it written by a man of God)? 3) Is it authentic? 4) Is it dynamic (does it come with the life-changing power of God)? 5) Was it received, collected, read, and used by the people of God? Again, to repeat what I said earlier, the councils did not determine what was inspired, they recognized what was inspired.

C. After the Canon of the New Testament Was Established

Our authority is the Word of God! This truth that is authoritative is also powerful. Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV): “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Bible claims to be and gives evidence of being inspired (literally “breathed out”) by God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV): “Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

This explains why pioneer missionaries, almost without exception, would begin their work with an unreached people group by translating the Scriptures into their language. Later ministries were raised up whose sole purpose was to translate the Scriptures into the language of the people – such as “Wycliffe Bible Translators.” There is power in the Word of God. Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” It is infinitely better to have the Word of God rather to not have the Word of God and to have miracles.

As a sidelight, even today most of the legitimate miracles take place in areas of the world where there is little if any access to the Word of God. And make no mistake, anytime a person hears the Word of God and savingly believes on Jesus Christ, a genuine miracle has taken place! A spiritually dead person is made alive – his or her blinded eyes can now see; deaf ears can now hear, and the new believer now has a new nature. They are changed down to the core of their being. What act, what change could be greater than this?

II. The Ambassador’s Trust (v. 3)

I remember a person in our church (who is no longer here) who implied that if we were spiritual, this is the way we would do mission trips – basically no food or extra clothes, etc. That certainly is not what this passage is saying. This austere approach was for the training of the 12 at this early stage of their ministry. It was not meant to be the norm. Look at Luke 22:35-36: “And He said to them, ‘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.’” This was for training purposes only to teach them to trust the Lord, which is the requirement for all ministry. Preparing beforehand is to be the norm.

III. The Ambassador’s Contentment (v. 4)

Jesus is speaking about those who are willing to support God’s sent ones. Once they found a place to stay, they were to stay there and not be always looking for a “better opportunity.” This is an admonition to be content. Philippians 4:11-12: “Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”

Comfort seekers have never accomplished anything for Christ. A committed life is much of the time an uncomfortable life. From the late 1800’s, Dr. J. C. Ryle has a word for 2017:

From no quarter has Christianity received such damage as it has from the hands of its own teachers. At no point has its teachers erred so much, and so often, as in the matter of personal worldliness and luxury of life. They have often destroyed by their daily lives, the whole work of their lips. They have given occasion to the enemies of religion, to say that they love ease and money, and good things, far more than souls. From such ministers may we pray daily that the church may be delivered! They are a living stumbling block in the way to heaven.

[Dr. J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Volume 2 – Luke*, page 293]

From verse 4 we see a very important principle. We focus on those who are receptive to the message of the gospel. Our mission teams that go into unreached areas use this principle. We call that person that has interest “the man of peace”. We look for a person that is open to the gospel and that is where we focus. That doesn’t mean that we refuse to be persistent; it simply means that our focus is on those who are open.

IV. The Ambassador’s Discernment (v. 5-9)

Shaking the dust off of one’s feet was symbolic of turning away from those who were hardened against God and His message and turning them over to God’s judgment. This isn’t referring to those who are slow to understand and believe. It is those who hear the gospel and make a final turning from it. We should leave them in God’s hands and go to someone else.

There are degrees of God’s judgment in Hell. In Matthew’s version we read in Matthew 10:14-15: “Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off 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.” The degree of judgment is determined by the light (truth) a person has rejected. I remember a sermon by Leonard Ravenhill entitled, *Sodom Had No Bible*. Sodom and Gomorrah experienced the judgment of God because of their wickedness, but they had little light (truth). Those who hear the Gospel in power have more light and therefore their judgment will be greater.

As the apostles go through the villages proclaiming the truth and having it evidenced by miracles of healing, Herod himself hears about them and his guilty conscience over beheading John the Baptist rises to the surface as he becomes frightened that John, and maybe even Elijah or one of the other prophets, has been raised from the dead. In verse 9, it is Jesus that he is referring to. Driven by curiosity Herod expresses a desire to see Jesus, but we find out in Luke 13:31 that Jesus was warned, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

Conclusion

How sad that much modern “Christianity” has erroneously taught that the kingdom of God is all about how Christ can make your life easier and more successful. Jesus in the Word actually said, “Come to me and die.” Luke 9:23-24: “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”