

Ambassadors of Christ The Forgiveness of Sins Part 1

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The Great Commission, we have heard those terms forever, but we have not understood exactly 'what is a commission'. A commission is what is given to an ambassador, a commission is the mandate handed down from the one who is sending, to the one who has been sent.

So when Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," we call this the Great Commission. But the threshold question is: Who is sending us, and who is being sent? In review, we have examined who Jesus is; we have seen that He is the Anointed One, He is the Son of the Blessed One, and therefore He is the King of all kings. His authority is plenary, it means there is no other authority other than His. He said, "I have all authority in heaven and on earth." So when He says, "Go ye into all the world," He is sending us in His place. And we are being sent, by the Lord Jesus, to stand in His place and to say what He would say if He himself were physically present as He was in the days of long ago. When Jesus says, "Go ye into all the world," He is actually constituting and sending ambassadors based upon the fact that He has all authority in heaven and on earth and He is sending them to do what He intends to do.

In one of the previous times, we spoke of how an ambassador is prepared and trained. And what we see that the ambassador goes to do, is to say and to do exactly what the one who sends him would have said, would have done, if that one were physically going himself. So in short, if Jesus were still on the earth today, and could go every place He wanted to go, then there would be no need for an ambassador; He would do it Himself. But He said to us that He was going away, and He was going to send us the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit would empower us, the Holy Spirit would train us, the Holy Spirit would develop us and would deploy us, equipped with the power and the authority; the ability to do the thing, and the right to do the thing, and would send us. So we have the power of God with which to do what we have been sent to do; Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth. And we have authority; we are legitimately the ones whom He has sent to stand in His place. When you understand this, everything changes about the matter of apostleship, the apostolic foundations of the church, and our ambassadorship as servants

of Christ. Because quite literally what it means is, we are going to do what He would have done if He himself were going.

So let me show you what He has sent us to do. This is from the gospel of John the 20th chapter, it has generally been said that the Great Commission is not in John; it's in Matthew, Mark and Luke but not in John. Let me show you the Great Commission in John. The Great Commission in John is in fact so plainly stated, and yet so far from what we accept as our embassy as what we are sent to do, that's why we don't see the Great Commission in John. But look, John 20:19, it says, "On the evening of the first day of the week," (this first day of the week, by the way, is the day on which Jesus is raised from the dead) "when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After He had said this He showed them His and His hands and His side and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you'." That sounds like a commission, doesn't it? "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." Lets pause there, we're not done with the passage but we'll pause there. That means He came to represent the Father, we spoke earlier of this, that He claimed that He was here to do the will of the Father, and restricted Himself, utterly, to the will of the Father. Saying, in effect, "I only do what I see My Father doing, the Son can do nothing of Himself." In this case, what the Son is saying is, "I am the Agent, the Father, My Father, is the Principal. In the principal and agent relationship, the Father has come in the form that you're now seeing." Because the Father is a Spirit, it is not necessary for Him to show up as a human body, but He may show up IN a human body. And Jesus was saying, "I am the human body in which God's fullness is present. So whatever I am doing, it's not the body that's doing it, it's the One who is in this body who is doing it; My Father is in Me, I am in the Father." In other words, "The Father is actually present with Me, in Me, by His Spirit." And "I am in the Father," meaning, "Everything I do I claim is being done by the Father. So whatever the Father is doing is evident in Me and it's not My works, but it's the Fathers works."

So that's what He meant by, "I am in the Father." "I am under the authority so completely, so fully as to make it that My presence here is inconsequential except that I am a vessel that's been given to His use. Everything I'm doing is what He is doing, so I am trusting that whatever He is doing will be how I live." What if what He's doing requires you to die, as in the case of Jesus, what then? Then, you obey the Father. So the scriptures say, "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." In other words, He knew what God would do, He knew that God would resurrect Him from the dead. But it was a shameful thing to hang on the cross, so He despised being put to such shame. Yet the joy of following the Father and seeing what the Father was doing, that joy that was set before Him was the strength that caused Him to endure the cross. "So the joy of the Lord," the scriptures would say, "is my strength." Joy in adversity, joy is not necessarily laughter; joy is the anticipation of seeing what

God will do through this thing.

So the kingdom of heaven has been described as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Because while you are waiting for the thing to unfold, your confidence is yet in the Lord. So the one who is God's agent understands that he or she is put to the difficult task of embracing what God is doing in the moment. And they embrace it with the joy that is set before them. Namely, as you come through it, the mind of the Lord in the matter will be revealed to you more and more. And the light and momentary trials that you go through are nothing to be compared with the joy on the other side of it. And the joy also includes your reward.

So God is not putting to mindless or meaningless service, those who put their trust in Him but He will put you through whatever it takes, including death, and you must be willing. In fact, in the process, whether you physically die or not, the reality is that you do die everyday. Everyday you die to some aspect of your being that opposes the nature of God and opposes the purposes of God in you. Your service to God indeed often takes the path of you dying to some aspect of what opposes God.

So it's not a benign relationship between the Father and His subjects or between Christ and His ambassadors; it's very active, very involved process in which He puts to death everything in the person that opposes Him so that the use to which He may put that person may be fully Himself. You see, you must understand that it's God's intention, and the specific intention of Christ, to live fully in you. Now He will not override your will to the contrary, He will not override your will and force you to do anything. But if you submit to Him, He will consume everything that is independent of Him, in you.

What then is your trust? Your trust is that He is the supreme expression of the thing that you were put in the earth to do. So if, for example, He's put you in the earth to conduct business, then your trust is by you being put to death in the areas such as manipulation, such as attempting to control; now you being put to death in those areas He has the opportunity to be the supreme business man. Well what business can He not successfully transact and conclude if He is the King of kings? If you're an artist, sometimes the tension is between what you perceive as the creativity that you want to engage, versus Jesus as the Supreme Artist.

The thing we have to keep in mind you see, is He is the perfect expression of everything that we are called to be. And He is vitally interested in expressing that through you; if you will permit it then, you in Him will become the greatest expression of anything your life could possibly have produced. In my own life, I'm fully aware of this. I had a well defined path that I wanted to engage, I knew very well what my strengths were and where I could succeed. But as I proceeded along my journey and He began to make His demands on me, my choice was to decide whether or not I was going to die to the way I

wanted to run my life and to give Him the same life and let Him be what He had put me on the earth to be, through me. And that wasn't easy, because I had very well defined ideas of what I wanted to be and how I was going to get there.

Really, there's nothing you can give to the Lord, but He will give to you everything. There's nothing you have that's worth anything to the Lord, except you. People think that if they give what they are to the Lord, that somehow they would become. That's like the boy with the five loaves and two fish who would have thought if he gave what he had to the Lord then he wouldn't have what he had. The fact is, this is what he got: He got to eat all he wanted because of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish. He got to eat all he wanted and he got to be remembered forever as the boy who supplied the means by which the Lord then fed the multitudes. He got everything and then more.

My point is, when the Lord elects to send you, He wants to be the one who goes in you and who does in you and who accomplishes through you, that's what He wants. He's able to do that by being in you. How is He in you? He's in you by His Spirit. And then you're allowed to be in Him. How are you in Him? By submitting all of what you do to His oversight and care. Your hope then is He will give you creativity greater than you could come up with; He would give you insights greater than you could possibly generate yourself. After all, who is the Holy Spirit? There are seven characteristics associated with the Holy Spirit, probably for our purposes right now I want to mention four of them: Wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and counsel. These are four of the seven spirits of God. The other three are lordship, power, and the fear of the Lord, which is of course is the beginning of wisdom. And the fear of the Lord there is a reference to the standard of accountability that restrains your conduct. The fear of the Lord then, is the beginning of wisdom because the fear of the Lord is the indication of what restrains you.

When you see people doing what they want to and using the name of the Lord and accomplishing for their own ends, using the facade of Christianity; you must recognize instantly that they have no fear of the Lord. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now when the Lord sends you out, He wants you to go but He wants to be in you as you go. When you speak, He wants to be the content of your speech; when you act, He wants to be the means by which you act AND what you actually do.

So you, in a sense, provide the shell that entertains His presence as He goes forth in the earth to do through you. But you may say, "But I don't understand that, why would He want to do that?" Here is the generosity of God: He could do it Himself, but in arranging to go in you and arranging to go through you, and arranging to do all that He intends to do through you; His intention is that He would be revealed through you. And the glory that is His, when He does what He does because you've taken His presence with you, the glory that is revealed, you get to carry. Now the alternative to that is the glory of what you can do being offered to Him for His glory.

Now let me get this right: The Lord of the universe, who can do anything, create anything, have anything, be anything; He wants to go where you are going and to do through you and then let you stand there and be clothed in His glory. But you don't want that, you want instead, with your limitation of knowledge, your limitation of resource, your limitation of counsel, your limitation of wisdom, your limitation of understanding; you want to do something out of that model and then say, "Here God. I wish You would take honor and glory in this." Well that's like offering filthy rags to one who is used to wearing the richest of clothing. Why would He be impressed with the threadbare things you could cobble together and offer to Him? Why would He be impressed with that, when that stuff He would routinely throw into the garbage because of the sheer weight and value of what else He has and because of what He is? Why would He ever want to take what you offer Him in lieu of what He already has? And what could you offer Him that He doesn't have?

My point, redundantly stated is, when He sends you, He sends you in the same manner in which the Father sent Him. "As the Father sent Me, so now I am sending you." That means you are His replacement; He is going away, He is going home, He is returning to the presence of God, He is going to send the Holy Spirit to empower you but now you are being sent to be and to represent Him in the earth.

So what would He do if He were here? Here is what He says, let's go on with the reading from John 20:21, "Again He said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.' And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Then He says in verse 23, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." This is the point at which, especially the evangelical person, would just throw up his hands and run, that's why we have never thought that this was the Great Commission. But here He is sending us as the Father sent Him, He is sending us to do what the Father would do and what He Himself did while He was on the earth. He sent us to do what He was sent to do, "Whose ever sins you forgive," yes, you heard me right, "Whosoever sins YOU forgive."

Wait a minute, you see we are far more comfortable with the church forgiving sins because they claim this is what God gave Peter and so Peter built the church and now Peter handed over to the church the responsibility to do what Peter used to do. No, Jesus didn't just give Peter that right. Here is the clear and concrete evidence that Peter was not given the exclusive right to forgive sins. Jesus breathed on how many of them? All of them, all 11, and said, "Whosoever sins YOU forgive."

So the Roman claim that the church, which was founded by Peter, has the right to forgive sins is erroneous. It's Jesus who forgives sins and you provide Him with the location in time out of which He can do what He does. This isn't something for the church institution

to do through it's agents. We are the agents of Jesus, He said, "As the Father sent Me, so now I am sending you." He isn't saying this to Peter, He's saying this to all of them. And this truth would deny the claim, of the Romans, that this truth ended up as the property of the church because Peter is not the only one who is given this, even if their claim is because Peter was given this and Peter started the church and now all of this ended up with the church. The church, as an institution, is not capable of responding to Christ, but you can. The Lord never sent an institution to do His will; such a thing did not exist in the first century. This came about by Constantine rearranging the order of the church to create an institution that could interface with the government from which it was now empowered. You see, Constantine is the one who changed the ambassadorship of Christ to make, between the church and the state, a nexus.

Actually the church that came out of and became the church of the Roman Empire, cannot also claim to be the church empowered by the Spirit of God, because the Romans gave it the right and support of the Roman government. That changed from this being the work of the Holy Spirit. The power that empowered the church was at one time the power of the Holy Spirit who was sent as the agent of Christ to deploy the power of Jesus to accomplish the purposes of God. The Romans changed that configuration and gave the support of the Empire to the church. At that point the church was no longer the church of Jesus Christ; at the point the church was the church of the Roman Empire because the power that supports it is what determines who it represents.

But even if the claim can be granted that says, "No, no, no. It really was the real church; the Roman empire just recognized it." Then the answer to that particular dodge is this: That Peter was not the only one given the commission to go and represent Jesus, in the specific matter of forgiving sins. Because here He says, "As the Father sent Me, I am sending you," all 11 of them. And by extension, the commission continues through to us, not because the church gives us permission but because we are the ambassadors of Jesus the Christ sent to forgive sins.

Now that raises a whole host of questions which we'll have to answer the next time. Who sins should you forgive? Whose sins should you not forgive? What if you are wrong, what if you make a mistake, what are the consequences? Surely you'll want to study this thing with me as we look at it in greater detail.

I'm Sam Soleyn and I invite you to visit me on the website, www.soleyn.com. Copies of these messages are available in various multimedia formats on the website. I hope you will enjoy the offerings of this website to you. God bless you. I'll see the next time. Bye bye.