

In His Steps: Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

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Christ came into the world taking the form of a man. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross – all because of the love He had for man. Adam had been in very close communion with God before falling into sin. But with the entry of sin into the world then man was alienated from God, his thoughts and purposes were always towards evil and this did not please God.

Would God let man perish?

God loved man and still wanted to restore the relationship that existed between Him and man before sin came to its original condition. God loved the sinner but hated the sin and so He had to make a way through which the sinner would be separated from sin. And the good news is that God provided a means through which the world would be redeemed and restored to their original condition. Christ coming into the world was not an after-plan done because man had sinned, but we are told that *“Christ was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:21)*. By His death and resurrection Christ conquered sin and died the death that we as men were to die because the wages of sin as recorded in **Romans 6:23** is death. All our sin was placed upon Him and He died on the cross that we may be forgiven. The law was that without shedding of blood there would be no remission of sin and this had to be fulfilled in order for us to be forgiven. It is Christ’s blood that was spilt in order for our sins to be forgiven and that we may be reconciled to God. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)*

What does Christ’s death and resurrection mean to us?

It is for this reason therefore that we as Christians have to have a deeper understanding of the great gift that is given us by the death and resurrection of Christ because we are the beneficiaries of His great sacrifice. That Jesus came to restore in man the image of His maker. None but Christ could fashion a new the character that had been ruined by sin.

What is God's desire for His saints?

It is very important to note that God does not just want to revive us but also to give us practical tools and divine appointments that we may become lighthouses that will send out light so that the world would see. That the light would shine so that ships tossed by the storms of life and sin would see that light and know that the harbor is near. Before Jesus left, he gave a very important message to His disciples. He knew that the work He had done was something that the disciples had to continue with even afterward.

The apostle Paul speaks of this wonderful charge to every believer who has come to know the love and power of God in their lives, in the book of **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ Jesus, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses on them and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Christ lived a sinless life for us that through the life He lived we would be reconciled to God. He was treated as we deserved that we might be treated as He deserved. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin.

What has God committed to us to aid in reaching the lost?

It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. This is the message that we as followers of Christ are charged to take to the world, but Christ would not just send us without a means to reach out to the souls that need to be reconciled to their Savior. In **1 Corinthians 1:5-7** Paul reminds the church at

Corinth *“That you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* These gifts were not only for this church but also for the church that would live at the end time.

These spiritual gifts that both the early and we as the church in this present time have been endowed with need to be used in the ministry of reconciliation, bringing back men who had been separated from God to the knowledge of the Savior’s death and resurrection so that they would be made new creatures closely bonded and united to their Savior. **2 Corinthians 5:18** tells us that God was in the world reconciling us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Paul also says that *“...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us” (1 Corinthians 5:20)* he goes ahead to say that *“we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God”*. The use of each and every gift must be to propagate this message. These gifts were intended for the good of His church and in order to advance His kingdom and interest among men.

Ephesians 4:12, 13 further explains that these gifts were given for *“the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”*. It is important to note that this ministry for which the saints are being equipped is the ministry of peace and reconciliation (**2 Corinthians 5:18**). It is important therefore that the saints who were to take this message be first reconciled to God. The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved. The ministers ought to be brought into an orderly spiritual state and frame, those who had been dislocated and disjointed by sin are to be strengthened so that each in his proper place and function would contribute to the work. And the work ought to be done until all come the unity of faith in Jesus as the son of God and our mediator.

Where shall we start?

Before the disciples were sent out to Minister Christ gave an important command recorded by Luke in both his accounts of the great commission in Luke 24 and Acts 1.

Luke 24:46-49 *“Then he said to them, “Thus it is written and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon You; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*

The first lesson we learn from Luke’s account is that in going out the disciples were to first begin with Jerusalem. Sometimes we wonder where we ought to use these spiritual gifts but Christ tells us to begin in our Jerusalem that is where we are, our immediate environment. If you cannot cross the oceans and the heathen lands explore then you can find the heathen nearer you can help them at your door.

How shall we prepare?

Second and very important is the imperative command given in Luke 24 and verse 49. Christ tells them that He would send them the promise of the father but then they had **to tarry** in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. This account compared to that of Matthew, Mark and John is very different. Matthew’s account has the words “Go *therefore* and make disciples...” In Mark we see the words “Go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” And in John Christ says that “... As the father has sent me, I also send you”. Notice that in the book of Luke it is recorded that the very last words to the disciples was not to hurry and leave but to tarry. This command is repeated in **Acts 1:4** “And being assembled together with them **He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father**, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me;” and verse 8 says “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Does the Great Commission apply to us?

The great commission was given not only to the disciples when Christ was leaving but also to the church in this time and it is our mission as the church to do as Christ commanded. Before we can go out to fulfill God’s command there is a very important component of the great commission that we have to consider. Before we can go out to use our spiritual gifts to call out the lost there is one very important thing we have to do, otherwise our labor would

be in vain. As Christ commanded His disciples we also have to **wait**. In our church today the missionary movement is far advanced than the missionary spirit. There is a lot of action going on without the Spirit and we have forgotten that to be filled with the Holy Spirit ought to precede all the actions of the church.

In that upper room for ten days the disciples waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit. As the disciples waited for the fulfilment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. Truths which passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another. They reproached themselves for their misapprehension of the Saviour. Like a procession, scene after scene of His wonderful life passed before them. As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character. Oh, if they could but have the past three years to live over, they thought, how differently they would act! If they could only see the master again, how earnestly they would strive to show Him how deeply they loved Him, and how sincerely they sorrowed for having ever grieved Him by a word or an act of unbelief. But they were comforted by the thought that they were forgiven. And they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.

The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to God for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving.

This the wait we are called to as ambassadors for Christ. But how often do we move without seeking the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit? We want to determine everything on our own, how we serve and where, without asking for God's guidance. We have gone so far and have begun to use methods to substitute for being filled with the Holy Spirit and still wonder why those who are reached by the messages we preach are very few. We are doing much without taking time to wait. We have to give ourselves completely to God and let ourselves be controlled, managed and possessed by the Holy Spirit in order for Him to work in us and

with us. For the spiritual gifts we have been granted to help us reach the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God we have to give ourselves fully to Him who has given us the gifts so that He may show us how we ought to minister using the gifts that He has given us. And this is only possible if we will take time in prayer and deep soul searching so that the Spirit may show us what gift we possess and how we are to use them in the stations that we are.

Final thoughts

In conclusion, we have learnt that Christ has granted us a ministry, and this is the ministry of reconciliation. He has also given us spiritual gifts to enable us take part in this ministry. For us to use the spiritual gifts as He desires then we have to first take time in prayer and deep soul searching to seek the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us because He is the author and giver of the spiritual gifts we need to use in this ministry.