

## THE RADICAL RABBI: A RADICAL COMMISSION (Matthew 10:1-42)

7.25.21

**Description:** *For the first time, Jesus sends His disciples out to do what He has been doing — preaching, healing, and announcing that the kingdom of heaven has come near.*

### INTRODUCTION

One day, some 77 years ago, a boss sent a notice to all the men and women working under him. They had a big job ahead of them, and he wanted them to know his expectations. This is some of what he wrote: *You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. . . . Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely. . . . I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.*

That boss was General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the men and women working under him were all the allied armed forces getting ready for D-Day — the assaults on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944 — the first step in taking occupied Europe back from the force of Nazi Germany. Notice what he did: He let them know their job — the Great Crusade, he let them know their importance — “the eyes of the world are upon you,” he let them know the challenges ahead — the skills of their enemy, he let them know his feelings about them — “full confidence,” and he let them know his expectations — “nothing less than full Victory!” When battle was joined, every participant in his command knew all they needed to know as they proceeded.

A good many centuries before that, Jesus was “the boss,” and He needed to give some instructions to the people working for Him. We’re going to look at that moment where Jesus first commissioned His disciples to ministry, and the things He told them. Now, because this is such a huge section, we will be looking at the overall highlights but, at the end of it all, I trust we will all get the message that Jesus is trying to communicate, as many of His words were not just for His immediate 12 disciples, but for us as well. But let’s first **start with a moment in prayer.**

### TEXT (Matthew 10:1-42)

***Jesus called His twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him — Matthew 10:1-4.***

This is arguably the first time that the disciples are going out into ministry without Jesus physically with them — becoming a preview of the lives that most of them (excepting Judas Iscariot) will lead for the remainder of their days. But they will not be going out alone; He is given them an awesome tool with which to do ministry. That tool? His own authority.

The Greek confirms what an amazing gift this was. The same word is used here — telling us that Jesus gave His disciples “authority” — as is used just prior to the Great Commission that Christ gave His disciples just before His return to heaven. Jesus said then, just as He was preparing to leave: ***“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 28:18b.*** The Greek word is the same in both places: EXOUSIA (ex-oo-see^ah). The word

translates as authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength. But what's so interesting is that it comes from a root word that means, among other things, "delegated influence." To "delegate" means a couple of relevant things: first, to entrust a task or responsibility to another person, typically to somebody less senior than the one doing the delegating, and then also to send or authorize somebody to do something as a representative. The disciples are experiencing both: being given a responsibility while also serving as a representative of a superior, in this case, Christ Himself.

But (and here's the exciting part), He is giving them His authority — the power He Himself holds and claims. All the power that He has ever had, He is delegating to them, to have and claim as well. So not only will the disciples be going out with His message, but with His power as well. He is literally giving them a piece of Himself to have with Him as they go.

***These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel" — Matthew 10:5b-6.*** The first thing to notice is the "scope of operations" to which Jesus is instructing His disciples. He does not want them going to any Samaritans or any Gentiles. They are to focus this particular outreach on the people of Israel. This lets us know that this was a unique mission outreach, unique to those particular disciples, and unique to that particular time and place. They are to be an extension of His earthly ministry, which was largely confined to the nation of Israel. While He occasionally ministered outside that parameter (the Samaritan "woman at the well," for instance), the disciples were to focus on Israel alone. And, of course, Christ's focus on the "lost sheep of Israel" is an extension of the intentions that God held for Israel as revealed to Moses all the way back in the book of Exodus: "***Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession***" — ***God speaking, Exodus 19:5a.*** God had had great plans for Israel, as He related through the prophet Isaiah: "***You are My witnesses, and My servant whom I have chosen***" — ***God speaking, Isaiah 43:10a.*** That was always Israel's purpose. However, once the nation rejected God's Messiah, then that purpose became the purpose of the church — Jews and Gentiles.

***"As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give"*** — ***Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:7-8.***

Secondly, as if to confirm who they are to be representing, He gives them the same message with which He began His ministry, as recorded by Matthew just as Christ came out of the wilderness after His encounter with Satan's temptations: "***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near***" — ***Jesus Christ, Matthew 4:17b.***

Third, His power will be giving them the ability to ***[h]eal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons*** — ***Matthew 10:8a.*** So, just like with Christ, the power of their works will underscore the power of their words, again reflecting Who is the One they represent.

And fourth, He reminds them that they have done nothing to "earn" the privilege of Christ's authority — not in words or works. They have been the recipients of grace, undeserved favor. They are to give as they have received.

***"Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts — no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village***

***you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:9-15.***

Jesus challenges the disciples, letting them know by His instructions that this is a commission of faith; they will be provided for. Implied in this is the most important question they will ever have to consider regarding Jesus: “Who do you say that I am?” Jesus had once said: “[Y]our Father knows what you need before you ask Him. . . . So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them” — ***Jesus Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:8b, 31-32.*** Jesus is saying that, as much as they can trust God, they can trust Him in the same way.

Also, He reminds them that, in their being watched over and provided for, it is God who will be watching the reactions people have to His Son’s message. The disciples themselves do not need to concern themselves with the responses, but only with the delivery of the message. They are to convey blessing upon any household that welcomes them, and to revoke blessing upon any house that winds up rejecting them. “Shake the dust off your feet” was a ceremonial gesture that communicated the ending of both relationship and responsibility to people. Ultimately, it is God who will be dealing with the responses.

***“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves (literally, “in the midst of wolves”). Therefore be as shrewd (“wise,” but in the sense of showing sharp mental discernment and good judgment) as snakes and as innocent (“harmless”) as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On My account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:16-20.***

You can’t say that Jesus was into false advertising. He knows, for Himself as well as for them, that ministering to the world will have difficult outcomes; in fact, as Jesus tells it, difficult outcomes is a given. Being a disciple of Christ will be hazardous to your health. But what counts will not be the consequences but only the completion of your ministry — so important to the Father that He will ensure that His word is being communicated by means of His Spirit speaking through you. So, while persecution is assured, so will be the presentation of the gospel. That’s really all that matters.

Now, beginning with this section, Jesus is looking to a time of discipleship beyond this immediate mission upon which He is sending these original 12 guys. While the disciples may have certainly experienced some negative responses to their ministry, we have no record that the disciples dealt with any level of suffering. But, beginning with the book of Acts, we certainly see what Christ describes here played out: The disciples were brought before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4 and 5; Paul was flogged on five different occasions; he also appeared before any of a number of governors and kings (including the emperor). But again, God will provide what He considers the most important — the words to say, and even how to say them. But all of these things — persecution

from organized religion, persecution from governments, will only increase as the final days approach.

***“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of Me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:20-23.***

Christ is here promising that not only will persecution increase, but it will become increasingly personal — even involving our families of origin. And the overall response to proclaiming the gospel? “You will be hated by everyone.” The word in the Greek here means the “malicious and unjustifiable feelings toward others,” and that same word suggests not only feelings of hate or thoughts of hate but acting on all that hate as well. And the reason for this? As Jesus says so simply, “Because of Me.”

***“The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:24-25.***

Very simply put, if persecution happens to Christ, it will happen to His followers; there should be no other expectation. So, if Christ was accused of being in league with the devil, why should His followers expect anything else as well?

***“So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:26-27.***

“Do not fear” or “do not be afraid” is one of the most consistent themes of the Bible regarding the followers of God; in fact, by one count, the phrase “do not fear” appears 365 times in the Bible. And there’s a great reason for that: God is completely in charge. As Paul wrote: [One day] ***God [will] judge people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares — Paul, Romans 2:16.*** In other words, nobody is going to get away with anything. Everything that men have done or thought, all of it, will be revealed — like the boldest headlines on page 1 of a newspaper.

***“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:28-31.***

And then Jesus so graciously spells out the value His followers have for Him, and how intimately they are known and loved: ***So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:31.*** That is why His disciples can be so bold with Christ’s message: ***What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:27,*** because His everlasting life and love for them is guaranteed.

***“Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before others, I will disown before My Father in heaven” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:32-33.***

There is no such thing as a “secret service” Christian. We are to be beacons of light; we are to be megaphones of the truth of the gospel. No matter how many our words for Christ, those must be backed up by actions reflecting those words. And because of Christ’s statements of how very much He values us, and how, with eternity in sight, nobody can truly hurt us, there is absolutely nothing to fear — an idea the nation of Israel would have known for a thousand years, David writing: ***In God, whose word I praise — in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? — David, Psalm 56:4.*** So acknowledging Christ to the world should be one of the most natural and joyous things we are blessed as Christians to be able to do. But if anybody disowns Christ before others, it is not only disowning Him but also disowning the truth of all the words He has given to comfort and encourage us.

***Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household’” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:34-36 (quoting Micah 7:6).***

Jesus does not sugarcoat the truth of the impact He could have on families. He is certainly the “prince of peace” within an individual life, as He brings the “peace that passes understanding” to our anxieties and, as Paul wrote to Rome: ***[S]ince we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ — Paul, Romans 5:1.*** The perpetual conflict and division that existed between sinners and a sinless God has now been healed by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. However, it seems that, where Christ is concerned, one man’s peace is another man’s provocation. Families have split over Christ; marriages have ended, friendships have dissolved, partnerships have broken. No matter how close the relationship, the subject of “Jesus Christ” brings nothing but the opposite of peace to so many people.

***“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for My sake will find it” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:37-39.***

And then Christ lays it on the line, out in the open for everybody to see. Even as valuable and loved as family is, if family winds up coming out as having more worth than Jesus, then Jesus wants no part of it. Why? Well, He chose to take up a cross for us — for everybody. If we in surrendering to Jesus Christ have died to self, then taking up His cross should be the least we could do for Him. And in case there is any confusion, Christ presents this with no middle ground. Either we will want to protect ourselves and our interests — in which case we lose — or live first and foremost for Christ’s interests — in which case we are eternally triumphant.

***“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes Me, and anyone who welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is My disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:40-42.***

And finally, Jesus closes with a common picture for that time: Providing hospitality for travelers was seen as the basic requirement of a polite society; it was the rule, not the exception. But when one provided hospitality — food and lodging — for a traveling religious teacher, it was assumed that the host was accepting the message that particular teacher presented. It is a wonderful way to

view our opportunities for showing hospitality for our missionaries or other traveling preachers — as an opportunity to, by serving them, be serving the Master.

## APPLICATION

OK; so let's go back to General Eisenhower's five (5) points that he wanted to communicate with all his troops, only this time apply them to Jesus, and what He wants to communicate to us:

He let them know their job; He's let us know our job as well: ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” — Jesus Christ, Mark 16:15.***

He let them know their importance, and His words reflect our importance to Him as well: ***“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:29-31.***

He let them know the challenges ahead, which are no different in our day than they were in theirs: ***“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. . . . you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On My account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. . . . You will be hated by everyone because of Me” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:16a, 17b-18, 22a.*** He let them know His feelings about them and, by extension, His feelings about us: ***“[W]hoever loses their life for My sake will find it” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:37-39.*** He let them know His expectations, which have never changed from the disciples to us: ***What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:27.***

And just like with the disciples, when any spiritual battle is joined, everybody in Christ's command should know all they need to know as they proceed.

## CONCLUSION

As we close, there is one additional element presenting itself here. In Eisenhower's words to his troops, he mentioned: “Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions.” But human supplies fail, or run short, or are disrupted.

Not so for us in the service of the King; His supply chains run constantly and perfectly; as Peter celebrated: ***His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life — II Peter 1:3a.*** So, in the context of this story:

- 1) ***“[D]o not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:19-20.*** God through His Spirit will always be giving us the right words, at the right time, in the right amount, and with the greatest impact.
- 2) Jesus has likewise given us the same authority as was given His disciples, a power that makes us mindful of the words of the apostle John: ***[T]he one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world — I John 4:4.*** There simply is nothing greater. And God continues to be up to the moment with everything we might ever need in ministry, which is why Paul wrote: ***[M]y God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus — Paul, Philippians 4:19.*** We will never be empty of what God knows we need to minister in His name for His kingdom.

God has given us everything we need to fulfill His commission. So, if there's nothing to be lacking, then let's be moving — all for Him! Let's pray!