



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 10:1-23

Topic

Jesus sends out His twelve apostles on a mission to cast out demons and to heal all manner of sickness and disease

Title

"Heal Team 12"

Introduction

When Mary Poppins arrives at the Banks home she's carrying a medium sized carpetbag. Surveying the room, she notices several needs and begins to pull items from her bag. Much to the amazement of Jane and Michael, out come a full sized coatrack, a large hanging mirror, a potted plant, and a floor lamp; as well as her famous measuring tape.

She may be traveling light, but she's fully equipped for her mission at the Banks home.

In our text, Jesus sends out His twelve special apostles on their first solo mission. They're traveling light but are fully equipped. "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease."

It wouldn't be all fun and games, however. Jesus also tells them about opposition to their mission, encouraging them to endure.

Equipped and **endure** will be two key themes for us. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Are Always Fully Equipped For Your Mission, and #2 You Can Always Faithfully Endure Your Mission.

#1 You Are Always Fully Equipped For Your Mission

(v1-15)

Before we get too much further we should discuss the context of these verses. We take the approach that verses one through fifteen were spoken directly to the twelve apostles of Jesus and that they were *for* them and *about* them. Christ's commission to these twelve men is not our commission today. We will see that He sent them only to the people of Israel to announce that He was ready to establish the promised kingdom of God on the earth.

We are sent to the whole world, Jews and Gentiles. Our message isn't that the King is on the earth and that the kingdom is about to be established, but rather that Jesus died and rose from the dead to save whosoever will believe and will be returning soon.

You will notice another change in Jesus' emphasis beginning with verse sixteen and continuing through verse twenty-three. For example He says in verse twenty three, "before the Son of Man comes." Wasn't He on the earth?

In those verses He's talking about a time when He will be absent from the earth but about to return. He jumps forward in time, past our own church age, to the Second Coming at the end of the seven year Great Tribulation.

Even though these verses are not *about* us, there are precious insights *for* us in them.

Mat 10:1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

Out of the many disciples following Him Jesus "called" twelve to a special place of service.

We might tend to think these were "the best of the best of the best," some type of elite ministry team. They were not. In fact we will read that one of them will end up betraying Jesus.

There are no elite servants among us - just people from all walks of life and ethnicities and educational backgrounds who have been called by Jesus to witness for Him.

They were equipped by being given power over unclean spirits, and to heal sickness and disease.

If you lived in first century Galilee, those were the issues you faced on a daily basis.

We live in twenty-first century America. Yes, demons still exist; and, yes, there is all manner of sickness and disease. But not in the same sense; not at all.

While believers are wondering why they are not casting out more demons, we must realize that Jesus has equipped us in other ways more appropriate to our culture and its current needs.

Two other things to consider:

1. If exorcisms and healing give credibility to the message of Jesus Christ, then there are plenty of them in the Bible for us to point to. In one sense, we don't 'need' more of them to validate the Gospel. The idea that only a contemporary miracle, done right before your eyes, will convince you that Jesus is God, is ludicrous.
2. Even in the face of these tremendous miracles Israel rejected Jesus Christ. It is just not true that signs and wonders and miracles lead folks to saving faith in Jesus. The opposite is sometimes the result.

The miracles Jesus wrought showed His compassion. They were motivated by His compassion. Even without immediate miracles we can be motivated to help others by showing the compassion of our Savior.

[Mat 10:2](#) Now the names of the twelve apostles are these...

"Apostle" can simply mean *messenger* or *representative* or *missionary*. The term is still in use - sometimes of all believers as representatives, or of missionaries. Others are called apostles in terms of their having authority in their denomination.

I think it best to reserve the term for the twelve. These twelve were absolutely unique. For example in the Book of Acts, after Judas has betrayed Jesus and hanged himself, Peter and the other ten realize that a twelfth apostle **must** be chosen. They mentioned certain qualifications, e.g., an apostle had to have seen the risen Christ. They then chose Matthias. After that, they are again referred to as "the twelve," as the unique apostles of The Lord.

If you want to use the term, be careful to explain you are using it to describe an average believer - not a person with unique authority over others, or who is in some line of succession with the originals.

Mat 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Mat 10:3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Mat 10:4 Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

Just a few quick notes about how the twelve were organized:

1. In the four different lists in the Gospels, Peter is always listed first, and Judas is always listed last. It isn't because Peter had any priority, but only because he would initially be more prominent in the early church. For example he preached the first sermon of the church age on the Day of Pentecost.
2. There are always three groups with four apostles in each.
3. The lists are arranged to suggest the first name in the list was the groups leader.

Twelve was an important number in Israel, as there were twelve patriarchs and twelve tribes. It was appropriate there be twelve apostles because Jesus came the first time offering the promise of the kingdom to Israel.

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.

Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus did minister to Gentiles but His primary mission was to the Jews, to offer them the kingdom as their Messiah. Through Israel all the nations of the earth would be blessed with salvation.

Mat 10:7 And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

In certain movies the hero does or says something and everyone then knows, "this is the one!" The miracles were to corroborate that the kingdom was at hand. These were the things Israel's Messiah would do.

We like to say, "there's no such thing as a free lunch." Well, there were free exorcisms and healings. It was to show God's salvation is by grace - a gift that cannot be merited or purchased by works of any kind.

Mat 10:9 Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts,

Mat 10:10 nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

It was a rule of hospitality that if you worked, you were fed. Their mission was work - spiritual work - and they would have to walk by faith trusting that the people they ministered to would recognize their labor among them and feed them.

Mat 10:11 "Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out.

Mat 10:12 And when you go into a household, greet it.

Mat 10:13 If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Mat 10:14 And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.

Mat 10:15 Assuredly, 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!

I've returned from a few missions trips and thrown away certain items of clothing; even a suitcase or two. Depending on the country, sometimes you just can't get rid of the stench.

The Jews were familiar with the custom of shaking off the dust of Gentile territories when they returned to their own land. To do this to fellow Jews was an incredible statement of judgment and warning.

To indicate that the folks in Sodom and Gomorrah would be better treated on Judgment Day was truly mind-blowing.

This was a full-blown, door-to-door, town-to-town evangelistic campaign. Repent, the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and we've got the credentials - miracles - to prove it.

Although they and their mission were unique, we've already gleaned some great insights, e.g., God calls servants from ordinary people like us.

The thing I'm most excited about, that is most encouraging to me, is the understanding that **God always equips you for your mission.**

As far as we can tell, up to now in Matthew these guys had not done any of these things. Then suddenly Jesus tells them to go out and cast out demons and perform healings - and He equips them to do it.

Now in one sense we as Christians are constantly growing, constantly maturing, constantly learning. One of the reasons we are told to go to church is so we can be "equipped" to do the work of the ministry.

But in another very practical sense we must believe that God has already provided exactly what we need in whatever situation we find ourselves in.

Are you suffering? When the apostle Paul was suffering with a fierce affliction, something he called "the messenger of Satan," he learned that God's grace was sufficient for him and he was equipped to rejoice in his physical weakness.

Are you tempted? God has already made a way of escape from it.

In fact you can do all things through Jesus Christ Who strengthens you.

The same Holy Spirit Who empowered the twelve to do miracles lives in you. Whatever you think you lack - **you don't!**

If you are in a situation that you think requires a miracle, and God doesn't do one, then you must discover the equipping of grace He has provided for you in your situation.

Don't concentrate on what God seems to be withholding, but rather on discovering what He has graciously, sufficiently, provided.

"Great is Thy faithfulness!"

*Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided -*

"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

#2 You Can Always Faithfully Endure Your Mission

(v16-23)

Jesus jumps ahead, in time, to the Great Tribulation. Warren Wiersbe noted,

The "atmosphere" of this section is different from that in the previous section. Here the Lord spoke of persecution, but we have no record that the Twelve suffered during their tour.

Jesus also spoke of a ministry to the Gentiles (v18). The Holy Spirit had not been given, yet Jesus talked about the Spirit speaking in them (v20). Verse 22 seems to indicate a worldwide persecution; yet the apostles were ministering only in their own land. Finally, verse 23 speaks about the return of the Lord, which certainly moves these events into the future. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that these instructions apply to witnesses at some future time... [the Great Tribulation].

Once again we will see things that are applicable to us; but it's important to keep texts in their context to avoid errors in our thinking about them.

Mat 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Mat 10:17 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.

Mat 10:18 You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

None of this happened to the twelve on their inaugural mission in Galilee. Some of it would happen to them in the Book of Acts, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

The ultimate fulfillment of these words is still in the future, during the Great Tribulation.

During that difficult time, the followers of Jesus will need to be like a hybrid between a serpent and a dove. One commentator explained it this way:

Alone, the wisdom of the serpent is mere cunning, and the harmlessness of the dove little better than weakness: but in combination, the wisdom of the serpent would save them from unnecessary exposure to danger; the harmlessness of the dove, from sinful expedients to escape it.

Although the illustration will find its greatest fulfillment in the future, the same commentator saw examples of it in church history and wrote,

In the apostolic age of Christianity, how harmoniously were these qualities displayed! Instead of the fanatical thirst for martyrdom, to which a later age gave birth, there was a manly combination of unflinching zeal and calm discretion, before which nothing was able to stand.

Mat 10:19 But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;

Mat 10:20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

This is no excuse to be unprepared as a student of the Bible. It is an encouragement that no matter how powerful are the forces against you, you can endure as Christ's witness by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

We are not in, nor will we ever be in, the Great Tribulation. The Lord has several times promised to keep us out of that "hour" that is coming upon the world.

Sometimes the situation you are in at home or at work seems like a mini Great Tribulation to you. When it does, you can endure as Christ's witness by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Mat 10:21 "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

Mat 10:22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

They say that blood is thicker than water but when it comes to faith in Jesus Christ, your blood relatives can just as easily despise you for being born again by the living water of the Holy Spirit.

Over one hundred thousand Christians are killed each year on account of their faith in Jesus. It will only get worse, culminating in the last half of the Great Tribulation.

Mat 10:23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Jesus was anticipating His Second Coming. When He says, "you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes," it's a reminder that mid-way into the Great Tribulation a massive persecution will break out upon Jews as the antichrist declares himself 'god' and demands to be worshipped. Jews will need to flee from city to city and into the wilderness in order to be supernaturally protected. They will still be on the run, facing extermination as a race, when Jesus returns.

"He who endures to the end shall be saved." In spite of rejection by their families, persecution from city to city, and trials before leaders, the Tribulation saints must remain true to their Lord. Their witness will be used by God to win others. Multitudes of people, all over the earth, will be saved during that awful future time of trouble.

Taken by itself, this could seem to imply that salvation can be earned by steadfast endurance. We know it cannot mean this because throughout the Bible salvation is presented as a free gift of God's grace through faith.

Neither can the verse mean that those who remain faithful to Christ will be saved from physical death; the previous verse predicts the death of some faithful disciples.

The simplest explanation is that endurance is the hallmark of the genuinely saved. Those who endure to the end in times of persecution show by their perseverance that they are true believers.

Quoting Wiersbe once more: "No matter how difficult our circumstances may be, we can turn opposition into opportunities for witness. We can trust the Spirit of God to help us remember what the Lord has taught us. Instead of fleeing and looking for an easier place, we can "endure to the end," knowing that God will help us and see us through."

Taking all of this in leads us to the encouragement that you can **always** faithfully endure your mission.

Maybe we should say "missions," plural. At any given moment you're going to be on several missions - some short term, some long-term.

Your relationships with others, for example. Some are long-term because they are family or friends or co-workers. Others will be momentary - brief encounters with strangers you might nevertheless be used by The Lord to minister to.

- You are fully equipped - whether you think so or not.
- You can faithfully endure - whether you want to or not.

Let's think so and want to and draw from God's sufficient grace and be His witnesses right in the places we find ourselves.