

9 Sermons on 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

The Ministry of Apostles

1 Corinthians 4:1-21 (NIV)

⁴ This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.⁷ For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

⁸ Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you!⁹ For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings.¹⁰ We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!¹¹ To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless.¹² We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;¹³ when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

¹⁴ I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children.¹⁵ Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.¹⁶ Therefore I urge you to imitate me.¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸ Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you.¹⁹ But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have.²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.²¹ What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

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Sermon 1

The Ministry under the Holy Spirit



1. Quote

It is one of the ironies of the ministry that the very man who works in God's name is often hardest put to find time for God. The parents of Jesus lost Him at church, and they were not the last ones to lose Him there.

Vance Havner

Power Truth

Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Ephesians 2:20 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

When Christ's mission ended, he went up in heaven and the Holy Spirit took over the young Church under his guidance. The original-ministry of Christ thrived through many challenges including the plan to conceal the resurrection of Christ, but it did not succeed. Christ appeared several times. That was at Emmaus and also at Jerusalem where the twelve were gathered. In a coinciding turn of events, his appearance¹ at Jerusalem was to the twelve disciples. Christ commissioned them and handed them over to the Holy Spirit. Most of what the apostles attained, they were under the auspices of the Holy Spirit.

Trouble in the World

The church after Christ thrived under the interventions of the Holy Spirit surviving over the past two millenniums. The fire of the New Testament has been burning since Christ left while the Holy Spirit increased the intensity of evangelization to all nations. The Acts of the apostles documents the powers and miracles of the Holy Spirit. The apostles wrote the epistles to the early churches and bore witness to the wonders of the Holy Spirit. Of particular interest to Paul was the Church in Corinth. Paul kept in touch with the challenges and wrote back the remedial epistles.

Grace in the Word

Every Christian has to support their church ministry in all means they can. That'll ensure that evangelization keeps on. Beyond material support to the ministry leadership, put them in your prayers. Respect the direction of your church and be under their counsel. In his epistle to the Hebrews² about this, Paul requested obedience and submission to the ministry leadership. They have a role to watch over the souls of the believers under them. Paul too asked the subjects to serve at the ministry with joy.

The ministry of apostles was for the chosen ones whom God promised to protect.³ The grace of divine protection allowed them to face extraordinary situations. Those situations were hard for both at personal and church level. As a pioneer carrier of good news, it was not easy. Flogging and imprisonment are part of the challenges that Paul and Silas⁴ did experience. Many people also had to turn them away. At most times, they found themselves face to face with the Roman authorities.

The mention of freedom and religion then was not anybody's affair. Remember that the Roman Empire had its own belief of the Roman gods. How easy would it be for the

apostles to preach contrary to the supremacy set forth by Rome? More critical still, the religion aspect had significant economic implications.⁵

Grace in the World

The Church continues to carry out the work of Christ. Christ is not physically present with us, but we commune with him always. All his teachings and ways are followed in the church under the eyes of the church leadership. It is a responsibility of the church to strategically focus on the mission of Christ even in the challenging and changing landscape. It all started with Jesus himself and in the final end, he shall come for his second coming.

According to Matthew,⁶ each of the disciples had a profession before following Christ's call. In our church, we also fall in the same scenarios. Each of us has a duty to fulfil. Listening to and following Christ is just an enrichment of our daily duties. The functions of the church for all, leaders and follower included, are all in line with the ultimate call to love God and others. By expressing our love for others, we take up the duty to spread the good word to others who may not have the good news. Better still, helping others to get saved by assisting them transform from sin to the new and great ways of Christ.

We all have to transform. Of the twelve disciples came Paul who was able to rise from sin to salvation. He's the very author of the epistle to the Church in Corinth. Paul was a persecutor of Christians. His transformation presents itself as a great gift to the church of Christ, with his epistles and teachings remaining relevant to this day. All that is done in the church is a perpetuation of the teaching and ideals set by Jesus himself. That's what we should all aspire to attain individually as followers of Jesus. Our actions should be a source of inspiration through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Although the early Church had its foundations weakening through internal conflict, Paul's immense contributions gave proposed solutions for more unity. What we learn from that is to be preachers of peace, getting people together in churches for the sake of Christ. That's for us all, leaders and followers.

What Now

1. How did Paul (Saul) weaken the early church?
2. Is it true that fishing was the occupation of the majority of the twelve disciples of Christ?
3. Why did authorities send Paul and Silas to prison?

Sermon 2

The Ministry of Apostles was firmly rooted in Christ



2. Quote

The Christian ministry is the worst of all trades, but the best of all professions.

John Newton

Power Truth

When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

Acts 1:13 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

The ministry of apostles was a call to valuable service for the sake of Christ, our Redeemer. 2 Timothy⁷ highlights the qualities of the apostle. They must not be full of quarrels. They must exercise kindness, patience, and they should be able to teach others. Christ too had these qualities. The high intellectual abilities made them reach out to the faithful in the early Church. The patience was critical since the word was still new. The access to pen, paper, and technology didn't exist in the first century of the Church. The apostles preached by giving examples those believers could comprehend at those times.

Trouble in the World

The revelations of Christ after resurrection did mark a new era of the Church under the Holy Spirit. Matthew⁸ triggered the preaching mandate. The Holy Spirit came in to fill the presence gap more sufficiently. The physical presence of Christ could not reach out to several places at a time. The presence of the Holy Spirit was everywhere; the apostles invoked his presence when miraculous happenings took place during their missions. The call was to perpetuate the good news in every intricate act of the believers. In all our shortcomings, we are reminded of the presence of God which is for the benefit of us all.⁹

Grace in the Word

The Apostles under the Holy Spirit became the ultimate vessels for the fulfillment of the gospel's promises. Under the ordinary circumstances, human beings fear many things. The fears are deaths, hunger, imprisonment, stirring the authorities. The Holy Spirit took over after Christ commissioned the apostles. The happenings during Pentecost were an international affair. It is the light whose shining is to illuminate all nations by the Words of the Gospel through Christ's teachings.¹⁰

The resurrection of Christ itself sets out the completion of the New Testament.¹¹ Not even death could destroy life. Christ died, but after three days among the dead, he is now alive as prophesied. It's the pivot of the faith as spread out by the ministry of apostles. Two millenniums down the path of time, it still is. Life is powerful than death, in Jesus.

Paul, through his wisdom through the Holy Spirit, exalts servant-ship. In Christ, we become His brothers and sisters by serving Him. The achievements of Paul himself in the early church were pure exaltation. Paul rose from the sin of persecutions to a fearless proclaimer of Christ. First Corinthians¹² redefines the power behind service in apostleship. Through humility, the subjects may question intuitively. Over time they will discover the immense teaching of the servant, even though they may be seniors.

Service to Christ isn't for fame. The truth consumes a soul, and it will radiate nothing other than the glory of Christ. The anointing of Paul and his work outshines his evil past. He is a living witness of Christ through the ministry of apostles.

Grace in the World

Christ's mission through the church is light that has never been extinguished. Through miraculous ways, the disciples of Christ survived numerous challenges to enable the church grow. The censorships tried to tarnish the evidence of Christ's resurrection and the wonderful works of the Holy Spirit. The truth of the Kingdom of God has lived under the auspice of the church. Christ remains alive through his promises. Through his ministers in our churches, we are reminded of that all days. Most government authorities remain hostile about the truth regarding the Messiah. Unfortunately, the seed of faith has perpetuated across time to date.

The church is the best suited body to handle the mission of Christ. The togetherness brings in hope and new energies to confront the challenges faced by faithful. The ministry of Christ remains the custodian of the truth. That truth is the confession of sins and commitment to receive baptism and follow Christ. At an individual level, we do not benefit from the immense blessings that an entire church can proclaim. There is power in the ministry that Christ established. There are blessings when we all confess and praise the Lord, at the church. From amongst the faithful, Jesus appoints few ones to be the clergy. Our role is to accept and request of the divine support to enable them to head the Church to the best of their abilities in Christ blessings.

The special ways of the ministry may not be documented. We bear individual and collective witness through the sharing. The knowledge that Christ ministers to us individually and collectively is also key in the perpetuation of the entire church.

The Holy Spirit has kept the ministry alive. When Paul was at the Church at Philippi,¹³ he made it clear that the faithful were to shy away from the tough struggles. However, his assurance was that of sustained, sufficient, and wonderful graces to faithful followers of Christ. Therefore, living as a member of a church, whether member or clergy is a great task. Christ put it in better words, to take up ones cross and follow him.¹⁴ That's the call Christ made to us to be servants so that we may be worthy of being his brothers and sisters in God's Kingdom.

What Now

1. What are the minimums for one to follow Christ?
2. What does Pentecost mean?
3. What are some of the qualities of an apostle of Christ?

Sermon 3

Witnesses to the end of the earth



3 Quote

Some plague the people with too long sermons; for the faculty of listening is a tender thing, and soon becomes weary and satiated.

Martin Luther

Power Truth

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Corinthians 9:1 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Christ's earthly mission set the foundation for the church. Christ was not to be physically present with us. The Holy Spirit took charge of the young Church, that's why the ministry of apostles comes in as the pivot. In Acts,¹⁵ God commands them to light up the world of the Gentiles and spread word to all nations of the earth. The Holy Spirit did this with the help of souls that knew God and His Kingdom. They are the witnesses to the mission beyond Jerusalem.

Trouble in the World

The church requires our contributions. It requires our resources in forms of money, property, and more crucially, our time. All these are to support Christ's wish to spread the gospel. God hates deceit and greed.¹⁶ He has graced our individual and communal lives with many gifts; our duty is to dedicate them for His glory. The book of Proverbs reminds us that all human desires are insatiable.¹⁷ So, the question is what is enough for us? Since the human heart remains hard to please and satisfy, may the graces of the good Lord keep us filled within his providence.

Grace in the Word

Love was the foundation of the ministry of apostles. The desire to let others know, feel, and live in Christ surpasses every other interest of the apostles. Christ's love for us led to him offering everything for us- his pride, esteem, and life. We are the witnesses to his love through salvation. Whoever loves others, loves God, and God too loves them.¹⁸ Through love, we were made worthy of the kingdom of God.

1 John¹⁹ refers to love being fearless. It's the same love that's been overflowing in the apostles. They went to spread out God's word, and they've been facing the roughness of authorities. They are blind to the dangers they risk for themselves. Christ makes them perfect in their pursuits for his sake. Jesus built a foundation for the church and it has endured all these ages.

Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians,²⁰ confirms that all promises of God are "Yes and Amen" for His glory. God is the ultimate power of creation. He has authority over every creature.²¹ At His will, God makes Himself great vessels for His message from Jerusalem to all over the earth. God cleanses and reigns in the lives of His servants to perpetuate and edify His followers through the church for all these years.

Grace in the World

The ministry of apostles is the church itself. Communing together keeps us in touch with God and the Holy Spirit. Each of us has that duty at a personal level. When we get to church, we join others. That coming together is a blessing and an encouragement at the same time. Getting to a church brings us under the authority of a pastor, whose duty is to lead the congregation in harmony for Christ's sake.

The current church is not without challenges. We are all human and our weaknesses in body and soul do surface at times. Actually, this is a huge part of why we require to keep together as a church. The church remains a refuge to all of us who are sinners. Although we are baptized and have renounced sin, we fall into sin, even in unknown ways. It is a long journey being in Christ, but his graces flow into our lives all days.

The church keeps the vigil of Christ alive. We share and remind each other that our home is in heaven. But the earth on which we travel along is full of evil, which we must overcome. Every time we are on earth, we have to keep in mind that our home is in the Kingdom of God. So, we travel and keep our faith alive by keeping our church together.

What Now

1. How did the apostles face authorities?
2. Can God anoint a sinful person to serve Him?
3. Why is the Holy Spirit in charge of the church?

Sermon 4

The Young Church

4. Quote

I also pray for favor and His anointing on my life and ministry that I might have spiritual blessing when I minister to people. They're my principal prayers; I don't have a prayer list that I go down.

Pat Robertson

Power Truth

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Christ commission the church through his disciples.²² He did not send them out in empty hands. He sent them with authority over demons, sicknesses, and to proclaim his kingdom among the non-believers. The apostles were under the auspices of the Holy Spirit. They would carry no food or money with them. So, God's providence was and is the fuel to the ministry of apostles. Jesus's commissioning command was for the apostles to preach the good news to all creatures. Christ's enemy is the evil one, and he gave out the powers to them over that.²³

Trouble in the World

The preaching in the early ministry was not natural.²⁴ The primary basis to preach out Christ was the overarching goal. Christ the founder is still true to the mission²⁵ even with those problems from the start. Our salvation starts way back in the Old Testament. God uttered of it in those times of old. In the New Testament, that covenant is fulfilled. His

army of apostles has borne true witnesses to him all over the ages.²⁶ Christ didn't forsake them. He embedded in them humility and the ability to work out the wonders of his mightiness for the glory of God.

Grace in the Word

Christ's ministry is an establishment of God's foundation of love. It is love for others which yields sympathy and service for each other.²⁷ From the brook of love flows forth immeasurable and priceless compassion and humility. These are the virtues that Christ did found his ministry. When love overcomes us, we lose value and accord it to others. That's what Christ did to save us. In his exaltation, God awarded him life. We are living witnesses to that, as we await his second coming back to earth.

In his counsel to the Philippians,²⁸ Paul calls upon us to imitate Christ. Living in the footsteps of Christ requires us to follow him with our crosses. Whoever wishes to follow Christ has no other route to God, other than Christ alone. In his humility, he remains obedient, even in death. His resurrection proves his promise of life after death. Christ had experiences on the same earth like us. The authorities during Caesar's time in Rome have not made much change. We still pay taxes today. Our salvation is the ultimate treasure, the crown of life. Apostles have proof of that too, by working miracles as Christ had promised them. They are our fore-witnesses as we follow along their way.

The cloth of the faithfulness is a blend of every virtue starting with love, compassion, kindness, being gentle and patient.²⁹ All these are hard for an ordinary person. With anointing, we meet all them for the sake of God's glory.

Grace in the World

Christ himself sowed the seed of the ministry of apostles. From the twelve, Jesus chose faithful witnesses to take on. Those twelve and later witnesses have followed suit. They gave up their selves for Christ and also for each other in service to God. Christ's payment for our salvation was in the same way.³⁰ To the world, Paul may appear to have been lost. But in Jesus, he found exaltation through great works. Paul was to transform from a lost soul to an icon in the ministry of apostles. God uplifts and forgives as part of His graciousness.

When we are part of a community in Christ, our leadership is entrusted to the pastors and bishops ordained into ministry. They are ordinary people like everyone else, but they

hold an office with higher responsibility in Jesus' command. More still, an ordained church leader has more oversight in the progress on the church itself. Part of that responsibility is to practice more of the virtues of Christ. To listen carefully, lead others in manners commensurate to that high office.

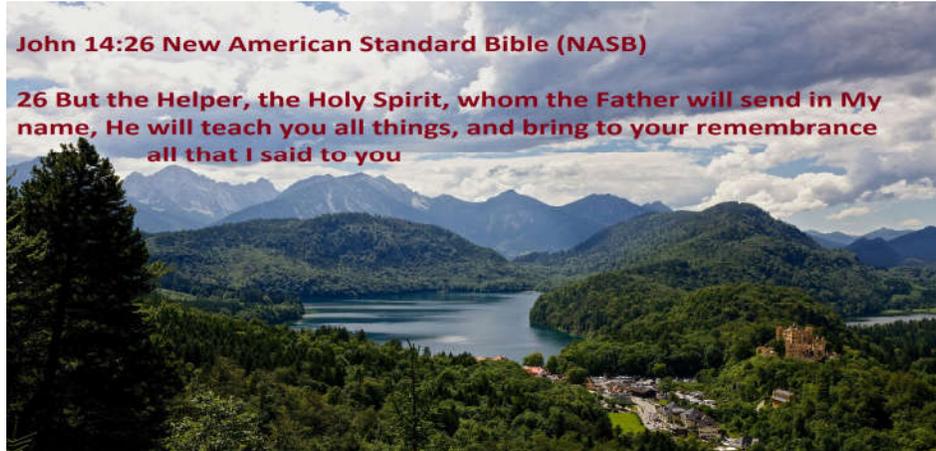
As followers of the church leaders, our responsibility is to support their ideas in progress. The apostles of Christ during his mission had to rely on inspiration from Christ himself. Where do we get our inspiration from at this moment? We get it from Christ's helper that is the Holy Spirit. Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit took charge and stands to this day with all the apostles, in challenges and in success.

What Now

1. Did humility of the apostles bar them from performing wonders?
2. Why did Samuel regret anointing Saul into Kingship?
3. In what ways are we as sinners like King Saul?

Sermon 5

The Pillar of Humility



5. Quote

One of the hardest jobs in ministry is keeping your own relationship with God where it needs to be.

Harold Warner

Power Truth

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works.

2 Corinthians 12:12 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Christ calls us to serve him as the cornerstone to our salvation. Jesus is the overall example of a servant.³¹ He came primarily to help during his mission. Although he is the Son of God, he bowed down to the pillar of humility. The same criteria emanate from those who minister unto his flock. Even though they are the leaders, service to others is the original calling. Humbleness exalts. It doesn't make one a loser, but it encourages the subjects to be in service to all others for his sake. That was and is the spirit of the ministry of apostles.

Trouble in the World

We must be like small kids in matters of faith. We must keep off judging others. The Apostles left their human aspirations in place Christ's. We are beautiful works of the highest God; we are subject to His will and ways. Christ's apostles were human like us. In their wisdom, God instilled in them the discipline to pursue higher and more selfless goals.³² Healings did not occur to benefit Christ but for the peace and faith of the believers and God's glory.

Grace in the Word

Obeying the call of Christ is not a walk in the park. For the apostles, it was not about them. It was about God and His glory. Although they could get weary as human beings, the Holy Spirit kept them alive and joyful. They excellently exhibit perseverance in facing the challenges set forth for them. Christ became weary at some time. He allowed God's will in his life. He laid out himself to the will of his father. For Christ to save us, it was God's plan. John³³ reminds us to always obey to the will of our fathers, God included.

The ministry of apostles took time³⁴ to form and carry on the mandate of keeping alive the fire of the Gospel. All that time, they created bonds with each other to build an active church. The church would face the challenges over the times and remain on a solid foundation on Christ.

Paul laments of hunger and thirst. After all, he was human. According to Matthew,³⁵ the intimate relations we have with Christ are not for the entire public to know. Why should the whole church know that you are on a fasting spree? The ministry of apostles experienced this too. Christ called each by name to fulfill his wishes in complex ways. Through all, they are in the service of one God and Savior through the Holy Spirit.

Grace in the World

The ideals of Christ are alive in the Church. Christ blessed the apostles and allowed them a crucial weapon. To all the apostles, Christ allowed them the power to bind and unbind evil. That's why healing and salvation are released during evangelical missions. The apostles' duty was break ties with evil and keeps ministering upon believers like Paul.

When we follow Christ, it may appear a radical shift. In our minds, the devil may make appear so huge a deal, to keep us lured to him. Our duty is to resist and seek inspiration from friends and church leaders. The church is there to pray for us through the leaders and through the individual Christians who feel that is their purpose. The power in prayer blends well when each one of us joins in.

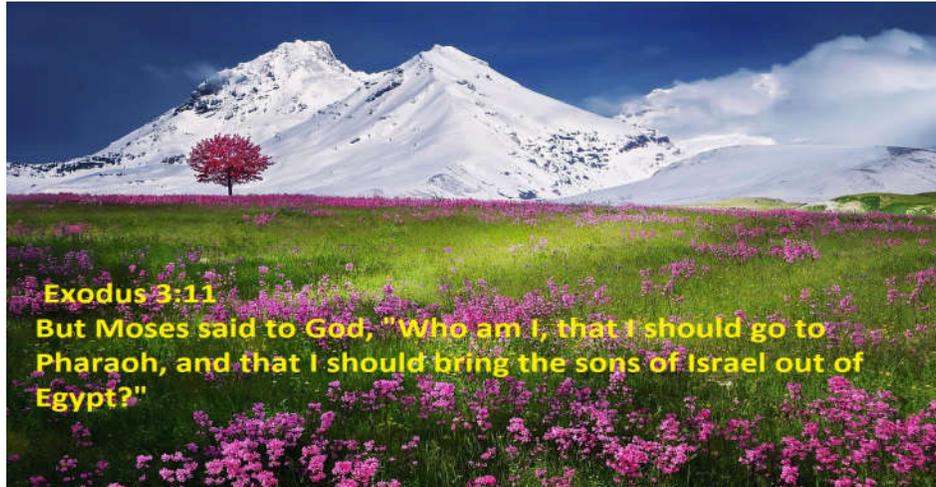
One great point for us to always keep in mind is that we are all apostles. Anyone who is baptized and has confessed Christ to be the Messiah has power over the kingdom of darkness. It's the role of the Christian community to nourish the souls under each towards the kingdom of God. If we stay in our homes, the church will be empty. If we attend to the services of the church, the apostles find meaning. The power in the worshipping radiates when everyone does their part. Let the Christians keep under the church leadership. Let the Church leaders seek the presence of God all along. When we gather for the sake of his name, we are his church.

What Now

1. During temptations, Christ declared to Satan that man could not live on bread alone. But man can live on "something" that comes from God. What exactly is that?
2. Where did the apostles get the Word to tell the people?
3. How is Christ an ultimate example of a servant?

Sermon 6

Christ and a United Church



6. Quote

I would have every minister of the gospel address his audience with the zeal of a friend, with the generous energy of a father, and with the exuberant affection of a mother.

Francois Fenelon

Power Truth

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matthew 19:28 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Paul has drawn a line in terms of preaching out to an established community. Preaching to non-believers should not be the same as preaching to non-believers.³⁶ Confusion challenges new believers at some point. Should they follow Paul or Apollos? Paul wrote to them that both didn't matter. Christ, whom they did preach, mattered. That way, there was to be no point of conflict within the church. Christ was the only unifying factor. So, fighting for either of them was not in line with Christ's will for a united church.

Trouble in the World

Not judging was the founding clause for the ministry of apostles. The believers and apostles were human too, and would have wished to follow the desires of their hearts. And although the apostles exercised leadership over the believers, they were purely servants.³⁷ The art of service was also Christ's command.³⁸ Christ washed his disciples' feet as a sign of leadership and humility. Humility does not erode your leadership; it only serves to strengthen the bond between the leader and the subject.

Grace in the Word

The ministry imitates the ways set forth by Christ. By embracing the virtues, the apostles only firmed up on what Christ had taught. They would practice what they knew and taught. In that way, Christians following them as examples found no difference between them and Christ. Paul wrote to the Romans³⁹ emphasizing on the need to practice whatever one preaches.

One recipe that would work against the apostles was that of individual pride. The world shares its truth that pride brings down an individual. A humble one gets exaltation and honor.⁴⁰ Our hearts yearn for dignity, and at some level, it becomes insatiable. When someone remains humble, they are not weak. They thrive in the wisdom of time. Self-exaltation has no meaning for the apostles. Their hard work in building Christ's empire is not for individual glory. The glory in Christ through the apostles endures as a significant foundation of the church.

God placed the apostles for everyone to see and learn from them.⁴¹ Christ's ministry benefits from first-hand witnesses from among the first twelve. Christ resurrected after his death. His rising from death has changed the way we believe. Jesus appeared to the twelve apostles on Pentecost. The others who joined in later were second-hand witnesses. They did not enjoy the direct physical interaction with Christ. Their encounters were doubtless in unique ways.⁴²

Grace in the World

The foundation of the ministry of apostles was a plan whose conception is right from the Old Testament⁴³ times. Christ's prophesy finds fulfillment as foreseen. Faith joins us to

Him via the covenant. We win God's favor by obedience and forgiveness to become children of God. The ministry of apostles did not use force to make people believe. Miracles and admirable characters attracted others to the simple ways of life.

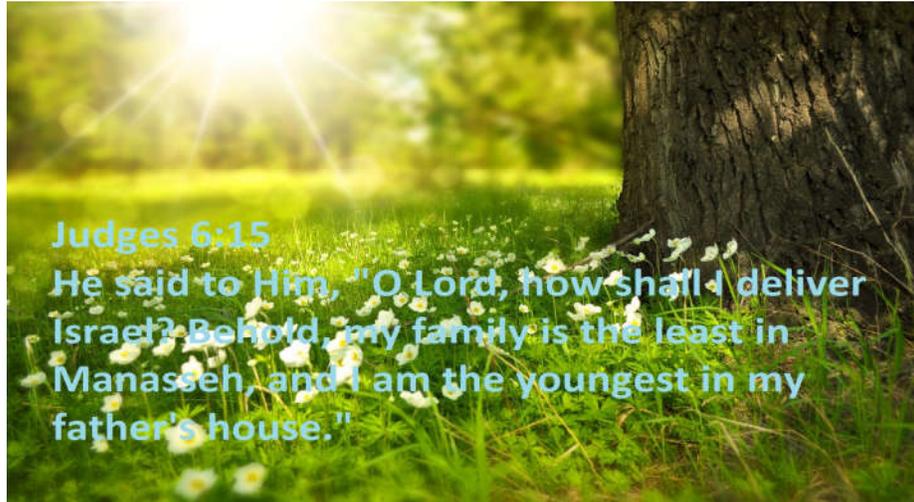
Christ reminds the apostles that they have to care for others.⁴⁴ Fulfilling God's command is minding others; it's unselfish. Those who are elderly are the lot that has already experienced Christ. The flock is the ordinary believers who look upon the leaders to guide them in the complex matters of faith. So, as one ages up with Christ, one is bound to be a source of wisdom for others. We have to keep sharing experiences and instructions in life. Learning is constant and craving to know everything about the mysteries of Christ is a lie. Every day, we commune with him and earn wisdom from him over time. The same understanding should become a blessing for both oneself and others too. Paul refers to himself as their father in faith. Although he is not the biological father, in faith, he is. Bringing the good news transforms our being into God's children. We are born through baptism and instructions into His way of life, as Christians.

What Now

1. How did the conception of the ministry of apostles' start in the Old Testament?
2. How did the apostles come to be witnesses of Christ's ministry?
3. What role is there for the more knowledgeable members of a Christian community?

Sermon 7

Giving up oneself to Ministry



7. Quote

While I am the one who made the choice to enter the ministry, there was a choice before that one, the choice God made in calling me to be his in the first place.

James Green Somerville

Power Truth

And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:14 NRSV

Trouble in Text

The passions of the world drift humankind away from God's will.⁴⁵ The flesh has weaknesses that every believer must guard against with care. The giving up of oneself creates room for others to find life, and for Christ and every holy thought and act to reign in life. James reminds us that our life is like a mist. The certainty of our tomorrow or the day after is unknown to human minds. In our wisdom, we are to leave that to the will of God. His providence will guide us through times and within the safety of His understanding.

Trouble in World

The disciples imitate Christ in their efforts to live as he did. They too laid out their lives for the sake of others.⁴⁶ With the imperfections within their lives, they left indelible marks about their relations with Christ. Mathew⁴⁷ reminds us to carry our crosses and follow him. That requires self-denial and placing him beyond our wishes. He will make our dreams come true in his name. It appears as a loss to follow Christ, but that's a sophisticated and narrow look. We lose ourselves, but he finds us in his glory.

Grace in the Word

Christ's crucifixion fixes all; he set a precedent for us. He let himself loose for the salvation of humankind.⁴⁸ That was the will of God. The apostles remained faithful witnesses to that. They too let themselves in the places of Christ, giving up personal pursuits for those that are everlasting within the God's Kingdom. It was the will of Christ that the apostles follow suit. That fulfills his wish and that of God the Father. The intention was to perpetuate the Kingdom of God among us. We are the custodians of the way to truth and life after Christ.

Christ is the offer of a fragrant sacrifice in the eyes of God.⁴⁹ In different capacities, the apostles kept the agenda of Christ alive. They have lived up to the ideals of the savior. God had planted within them the desire to have others know about him and live life in the full provisions of the sacred promises. Life has a baseline in giving up of ones-self. God gave up a part of His breath of life for humanity. How can humankind repay God for that? It's a priceless offer and remaining in His ministry is the only way to say thanks and to appreciate God Himself.

Temptations litter the paths of the faithful.⁵⁰ The church and the ministry of apostles are the temples that keep alive the candles of life. The vigil has no known end time. It's that

humbling. When Christ comes back for the second time, the fire and flames of the vigilant watchers will end.

Grace in World

The Lord God is the everlasting pillar. God defeats all evil plans and safeguards life.⁵¹ The Israelite's sang a song of praise to God. He allowed them past the Red Sea and crushed the pride of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. The Lord rescued the Israelites from hunger with manna and quails. He gave water to the thirsty Israelites in the middle of the wilderness. He also defeated the proud Amalekites in the desert. God is a pillar of Justice. Throughout all ages, men have seen the invisible hand slap away death and pave the way to life. The ministry of apostles bears witness to all this. At the end of time, the powerful but not physically visible God will remain worthy of the praises from our hearts.

God chose Solomon and gave him the wisdom to rule over Israel.⁵² At his appointed time, Christ came to us and lived amongst humankind. Although His Kingdom reigns forever, He did not lift a finger over any human being. The humility of Christ wins here. Though we are worthy of punishments, He exempts us from the wrath of sins. Those called in to lead in his flock too are witnesses to His Kingdom. The earth scorns them, but heavens beckon unto them in glory.

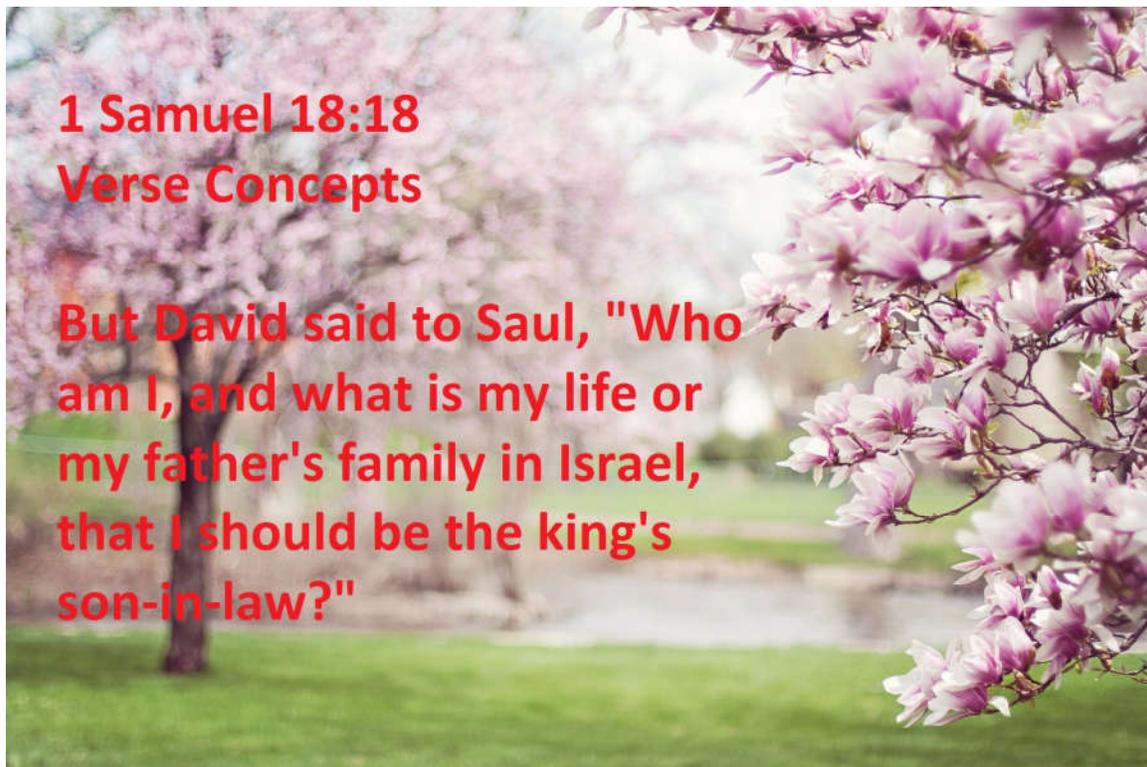
The call to justice against sin is staying pure from sin.⁵³ Our vigil is to confess and confess. We are that weak, and Christ acknowledges that by opening a door of forgiveness to all who'll believe.

What now

1. What number of times should one earn forgiveness?
2. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, was it by walking on water or the seabed?
3. At what cost did God share His breath of life?

Sermon 8

The Ministry – A Fountain of Endless Love



**1 Samuel 18:18
Verse Concepts**

But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?"

8. Quote

**Your ministry will never be bigger than
your vision of Jesus.**

Patty Hammond

Power Truth

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12 NRSV

Trouble with Text

Paul wrote to the Corinthians⁵⁴ about the unity of the church. We all belong to Christ. Our creation is in the image and likeness of God, who is love. The love of God did not end with human transgressions at the Garden of Eden. To this age, God's pursued man's salvation by living amongst us as a Messiah. The eyes of the world were blind to His true identity, until He sealed the New Covenant and left us under the ministry of apostles. It is our duty to guard our hearts and against the pursuits of evil all days.

Trouble in the World

One of the most significant problems that Paul was facing was maintaining the unity of the Churches. Paul was unique in lecturing out comprehensively on such matters. Believers and leaders fighting⁵⁵ within churches were not in order at all. Channeling the energy for the sake of Christ is a better alternative. The insults and infighting are plots created by the evil one to disrupt the harmony of the Church. Cultivating harmony was the call of the ministry of apostles. Let each one of us guard our hearts against every iniquity that causes turmoil to the House of God, a holy place.

Grace in the Word

At the center of the ministry of Apostles was Paul. Paul confessed⁵⁶ his persecutions, and in him, God found a vessel full of faith wisdom, love, and patience. God traveled with Paul during his missionary journeys. The original Ministry had no coordination office. The Holy Spirit coordinated everything before the Church could establish itself adequately. Paul is a clear example of the power of forgiveness in Christ. After the restoration of his sight and anointing, he did his business, seeking more about Christ in his life. With amazing blessings from God, Paul became an advocate of the believers. He was a foe turned friend. Do we yearn to serve Christ that way? Will he forgive all our sins? Are we worthy to be witnesses to his love and life?

Paul uprooted all his bitterness, anger, and revenge.⁵⁷ He received exaltation among the Ephesians and later wrote out to them. He advocated compassion, kindness, and forgiveness amongst the believers, just as God had done so for them at no cost.

In Matthew,⁵⁸ the power of forgiveness shines out. If you want God to forgive you, you have to forgive also. Forgiveness doesn't make a person weak. It only builds up your confidence and that of fellow believers. It is through the power of forgiveness that the power of living in His presence remains alive in our hearts. That set people free from wrongs committed by them.

Grace in the World

The ministry of apostles is the fountain of nourishment of believers. Praying, praising, and adoring God as a team is a platform we must forever build and maintain.⁵⁹ Paul encouraged togetherness. Communing with others gives us the time to learn, bond, and appreciate one another. We must be alive in the fact that all us are different but very similar in many ways. Those are the wonders of God's creation. When we are alive to these facts, we can then be able to explore our connections with God. At no time should competition arise.

The psalmist alludes to the joy and pleasantness that flows from a united body of Christ. We all matter; we are all in service to each other. And to our leaders, we spice up or respect, honor, and say a prayer for their well-being. Support to our leaders and being faithful echoes back to our lives in magnified ways. If we do not judge each other and remain blameless, He is amongst us. Remain confident in the knowledge that His presence watches over us too.

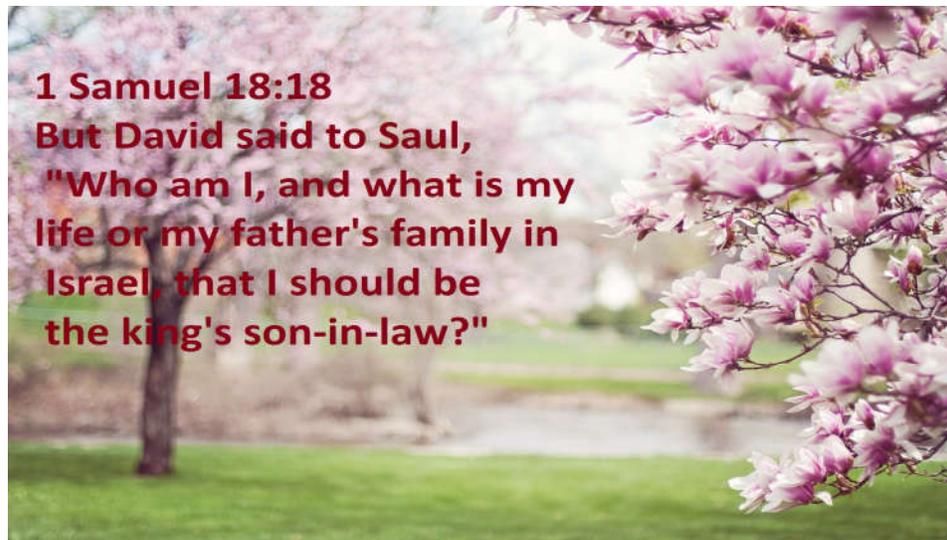
Christ, the founder of the Ministry of disciples, interacted with people from all walks of life. His was the business of calling back sinners to salvation. Jesus associated with the woman at the well. The Jews were looking down upon Samaritans. Christ's dialogues with her⁶⁰ meant to break barriers. For Christ, she was not a sinner anymore. She was a witness to his forgiveness. And how precious is it to find mercy and truth. He relieved us of the yokes of sin and shared with us in the table of life everlasting. All these are works of the ministry of the Apostles.

What Now

1. At what point did God do away with the plan to save humanity?
2. Is there any group of people that the ministry of apostles did not welcome to God's Kingdom?
3. How right is it to request forgiveness and not to forgive others?

SERMON 9

It's Not about Earthly Wisdom



9. Quote

If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?

David Livingstone

Power Truth

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.

Acts 4:13 NRSV

Trouble in Text

The foundation of the ministry of apostles targeted to call all willing followers of Christ. The call was for everybody, not just for Gentiles or Jews. The apostles took on the trusteeship of the Kingdom of God and have been changing hands for many generations. In the Gospel of Matthew,⁶¹ Christ told Peter that he was the rock upon which he will build his Church. Among the Apostles, Peter had the closest connection with Christ. He chose Peter to head the Church during its start. Peter was faithful and courageous all through Christ's mission on earth.

Trouble in the World

Christ himself redeemed the sinners and founded the church. In Acts, Christ encouraged the apostles, who are the shepherds to Christ's flock, to keep vigil over the church.⁶² They were overseers under the Holy Spirit. The price Christ paid for it was the covenant sealed with his blood. The duty of the Apostles was to keep the Church in harmony,⁶³ coordinating the many separate parts into one concert for the worship of Christ. Through the Church, we individually find meaning when we interact with others for the sake of Christ.

Grace in the Word

The Word is for us to meet often and build within each of us the virtues that Christ advocated.⁶⁴ God's kingdom is not for some select few, neither is it for individuals. Christ's wish is to see all us in his Kingdom. Paul shares this truth to the Hebrews to show them the real picture of Christ's love. Christ's love has no conditions to where we come from or belong. In reality of our human weaknesses, we are to keep encouraging each other. Problems we share are already half-solved. When we speak out of our shortcomings, we acknowledge them. Our brothers and sisters have opportunities to listen and support us through the hard times. Of course, even at joyous times, we should also take note to share too.⁶⁵ That's the spirit of a community in Jesus.

The original foundation of the church did not change much in its procedures. At church, we sing praise, pray, and worship. Paul advocates for us doing that in unison and

checking each other out of sinful practices. When you look at your fellow Christians, you learn from their experiences. The learning sharpens your knowledge, and you're able to guide yourself and others in the ways of truth. Utmost, none of us should be selfish in calling others to God. God, being love, calls in everybody. We are all part of His marvelous creation. Great responsibility lies with humanity on earth, because God made man in His likeness and image.

Grace in the World

Christ is the founder of the ministry of Apostles.⁶⁶ He equipped them with all the necessary provisions to build a faithful and united church in Christ's eves. A Church in unity multiplies the compassion among the believers. At some point, the compassion spills over to the community surrounding the church. That's regardless of whether they are Christian believers or not. Christ's kindness is for all, not just for a selected few or those who share in our faith. The church too is an avenue for collective efforts. As an individual, one may lack in materials and expertise to carry out some tasks. But, in the harmony and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we come together as a winning team. As a church, we are to benefit singly and collectively.

Spreading the word is a task for us all. The presence of a Church only serves to compound the importance and effectiveness of the outreach.⁶⁷ Apostles are professionally the custodians of the mysterious manifestations of the Kingdom amongst us. So, our voices must not be hoarse in proclaiming it and calling others to be faithful witnesses of Christ. With a church, we get the benefits of networks to perpetuate faith. In today's global village, churches can marshal compassionate support within short spans of time. They can respond to the disasters all over the globe. The Church is not only to live up to the expectations of believers. It should strategically align itself to the challenges and opportunities of our times.

What Now

1. Whose duty is it to spread the gospel?
2. We should only be compassionate to those who are Christian believers. Is that okay?
3. With salvation, we do not need much learning. Is that true or false?

¹ John 20:21-23
² Hebrews 13:7
³ Isaiah 41:10
⁴ Acts 16:16-40
⁵ Acts 16:19
⁶ Matthew 4:18-22
⁷ 2 Timothy 2:24
⁸ Matthew 28:19-20
⁹ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
¹⁰ Acts 2
¹¹ 2 Timothy 1:10
¹² 1 Corinthians 9:19
¹³ Philippians 3:13-14
¹⁴ Matthew 10:37-39
¹⁵ Acts 13:47
¹⁶ Luke 12:15
¹⁷ Proverbs 27:20
¹⁸ 1John 4:16
¹⁹ 1John 4:18
²⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:20
²¹ Job 12:7-10
²² Luke 9:1-6
²³ Mark 3:15
²⁴ Acts 19
²⁵ Ephesians 2: 20
²⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:12
²⁷ 1 Peter 3:8
²⁸ Philippians 2:5-8
²⁹ Colossians 1 3:12
³⁰ 1 Corinthians 15-39
³¹ Mark 10:45
³² Matthew 9:6-8
³³ John 14:23
³⁴ 1 Peter 2:2
³⁵ Matthew 6:16
³⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:4-10
³⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:5
³⁸ John 13:1-17
³⁹ Romans 2 : 20-24
⁴⁰ Proverbs 29:23
⁴¹ Acts 1:21-22
⁴² Acts 13:31
⁴³ Romans 1:1-5
⁴⁴ I Peter 5: 1-3
⁴⁵ James 4:4-17
⁴⁶ 1 John 3:16
⁴⁷ Mathew 16:24-28
⁴⁸ Galatians 1:4
⁴⁹ Ephesians 5:1-2
⁵⁰ Philippians 2:5-8
⁵¹ Exodus 15-18

52 1 Chronicles 28:5
53 Psalm 45:6
54 1 Corinthians 12:12
55 1 Corinthians 1:10
56 1 John 1:9
57 Ephesians 4:31-32
58 Mathew 6:14-15
59 Hebrews 10:24-25
60 John 4:11
61 Matthew 16:18
62 Acts 20:28
63 Romans 12:4-5
64 Hebrews 10:24-25
65 Matthew 18:20
66 Ephesians 4 :11-13
67 Romans 10:17