

Empowered for a Purpose

By Lonny R. Bower, 16 September, 2009

Matthew 28:18-20

Introduction:

Move with a sense of purpose! Have you ever heard that screamed at someone, perhaps even directed at you? I can tell you that depending on the origin it can certainly produce effective results. I recall standing in the Texas heat listening to one of many drill sergeants barking out commands to all the newly assigned recruits – MOVE WITH A SENSE OF PURPOSE!!! One screamed. Most of us would discover a new found purpose over the next few weeks and for some these words would change their perspective forever. Far be it from me to compare Jesus to my drill sergeant, in fact many of the recruits believed that he was Lucifer and that's how he was referred to by the recruits. However, I do want to draw a parallel between the phrase "move with a sense of purpose" and the Lord's command "to go". His command is known as the Great Commission, but many have taken it to be the Great Suggestion. In fact it was not a suggestion, but a command, a command that was filled with purpose. He not only told us to go, but what to do as we are going. In essence He told us to move with a sense of purpose. Our purpose is to be a shining city on a hill – a reflector of His great light and as we reflect (lift) His light up men will be drawn unto Him (John 12:32). The church has lost her purpose and has settled for a counterfeit, a form of godliness, a pseudo power that absorbs His light but does not reflect any. It's time to rediscover our purpose and that is to go and preach, to go and teach, to go and baptize, to go and make disciples of Christ. When we truly get a hold of this command and actually become doers of the word and not just hearers, we will experience a power that we have never before identified with – power to witness! These are those moments that happen as divine appointments, unplanned, unrehearsed and unexpected. As we go, He will send. I'm reminded of Peter, James and John who fished all night and caught nothing – I can relate.... They fished all night because they knew that the waters they were fishing in had the potential to fill their nets, so regardless of the empty net, pull after pull, they fished on. Then Jesus intervened and commanded them "cast your net on the other side of the boat" but do it with purpose and urgency I believe He was saying. As we know, they pulled so many fish in that their net began to break and their boat began to sink! This was power to fish as they have never fished before, what a rush it must have been. Friends this is how it will be for many, many who have fished all night and caught nothing, because they are not fishing with purpose or urgency. Jesus is here to change your story – if you'll just obey His command to go. As we continue through the lesson keep the purpose of His command to go, in clear view, for if we lose the purpose we forget the command.

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I. Eyes for the Lost – John 4:27-38; Matthew 9:35-38

Many Christians have not so much forgotten the command of the Lord to go, (most will readily admit they are very familiar with the Great Commission) but are compassionless toward the lost. In other words they just don't care that they are facing an eternal death. Not only do we need to be people with passion, we need to be a people of compassion – so much so that when we look on the lost we are moved in our spirit by the Spirit. The word of God has set the standard for what a Christian is, but a good majority of well meaning Christians have not heeded the word. Instead they have let the world define what a Christian is and as a result have become ignorant to the righteous requirements of the word. Let me explain it through the following scriptures. John 14:15 Jesus says, *“If you love me, keep my commandments”*. Then in 1 John 2:4, 6 John Says, ⁴*He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* ⁶*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.* This is a hard hitting word proving again to be living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12) and good for rebuke, correction, instruction and training (2 Timothy 3:17). I preach a sermon called “The Evangelism of the Church” the just of it is this, the church has been commanded to go and evangelize the world, but instead the world has evangelized the church and in effect has redefined what it is to be a Christian – very little semblance to Christ. Remember the purpose of our going; it is to turn the lost to Jesus. However, if we do not have eyes for the lost there will not only be a lack of purpose, but neither will there be an urgency to go.

Think About it:

Has God ever given you a burden for someone that was lost? If so, what did you do about it?

Have you ever prayed Lord give me a burden for the lost? Why or why not?

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¹In a world in which nine out of every ten people are lost, three out of four have never heard the way out, and one of every two cannot hear, the church sleeps on. Could it be we think there must be some other way? Or perhaps we don't really care that much.

II. Divine Purpose – Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9

God is waiting for us to begin fulfilling our divine purpose so that all will hear the word. When our purpose coincides with God's will we then experience the fullness of His authority. His authority in us

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births passion, which births urgency, which springboards us into the harvest fields where we are able to be about the Father's business (more on this in point III). Some will reap immediately, some will labor and toil, plant and water over what others will reap. We must be determined to not be discouraged by that lack of harvest and likewise we must never, never, never be satisfied with the harvest! Rejoice yes, glory yes, but be satisfied no! We must labor over the harvest as if they were dying, because they are, we don't have time to stop and relish in the victory lest we forget our purpose, but must press on with all the urgency because our Lord is simply waiting for more to repent. There will be at least one more and there will be a last one to repent. That is, one day after a sinner cries out to the Lord the Father will look at Jesus and say he's/she's the one, quickly now, go get them! The Lord has not changed His mind, He still wants all to be saved and the only way they will be is if we are obedient to His command to go, we cannot lose sight of the purpose! Many of good intending Christians have stood in the way of others who were trying to go because it didn't meet their expectations. God will call to account those who have stood in the way of His servants who were trying to go. For those who facilitate the going however, He has a great reward laid up for them in heaven. Anytime you facilitate the going of a Christian you too share in that harvest. When we go it pleases God, when we don't go it pleases men – when we go souls are saved, when we don't go souls are lost. Our purpose is far greater than any program, than any building, than any ministry – it's divine!

Think about it:

Have you ever tried to go and been stopped by men (to include men's requirements)?

Have you wrestled with God's command to go, did you surrender or are you still wrestling?

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²The progress of the Gospel has often been hindered by people with closed minds who stand in front of open doors and block the way for others. In 1786, when William Carey laid the burden of world missions before a ministerial meeting in Northampton, England, the eminent Dr. Ryland said to him, "Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine!" More than one Spirit-filled servant of God has had to enter open doors of opportunity without the support of churches and religious leaders.

III. Power to Witness – Acts 1:8-11; 8:5-8, 26-40

Authority, this is what being baptized in the Holy Spirit is really about. The Holy Spirit comes upon us in power and shares His power and authority with us. He gives us power to witness, power to heal,

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power to speak in tongues and authority to stand against the evil attacks of the enemy. This is what Jesus said would be happening in the lives of His followers – those who believe (Mark 16:17, 18). The baptism of the Holy Ghost is not a made up doctrine, it is a divine gift, a promise of the Father and when we receive it we receive Him – the Holy Spirit. Afterwards, our lives are significantly different. The experience is not peculiar to only Pentecostals; the promise of the Holy Spirit is to all people. Everyone who is a Christian can receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. One knows that they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit when they begin to speak in tongues. However, His power and effect go well beyond speaking in tongues! Many times within the Pentecostal tradition the emphasis seems only to be on the tongues. This is an awfully narrow minded way of viewing the power and authority Jesus has given us. The purpose of our baptism in the Holy Spirit is to give us power to witness and authority to stand against the enemy. This cannot be defined through physical experiences alone, but must be defined through the supernatural occurrences that spontaneously happen in our lives as we begin to go, walking in this new found power and authority. I believe that many have accepted an emotional experience versus a supernatural transformation. If one has to ask – do I have power to witness? Then the Answer is no, no you don't. The wonderful thing about the Spirit is when He comes upon you in power; He takes over and begins to lead you deep into harvest fields where you can't help but witness. As you continue to go and fulfill your divine purpose the Holy Spirit is their working, confirming the word that is preached with signs and wonders. Our focus cannot be on the signs and wonders, but we must have eyes for the harvest, we must be focused on the harvest and when we begin to pray for workers (Matthew 9:35-38), the Lord will equip us with His Holy Spirit to do the work. In this way we become like Him and have a greater influence on the lost than those who just have a form of godliness.

Think about it:

Do you find it difficult to witness to the lost?

Do you walk in the authority that Jesus gave you?

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To accept Christ is to know the meaning of the words "as he is, so are we in this world." We accept his friends as our friends, his enemies as our enemies, his ways as our ways, his rejection as our rejection, his cross as our cross, his life as our life and his future as our future. If this is what we mean when we advise the seeker to accept Christ, we had better explain it to him. He may get into deep spiritual trouble unless we do. - A. W. TOZER

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Conclusion:

The church does not have time to sit around and talk or argue theology – she must be about the Father’s business. She must not become so focused on ministering internally that she totally forgets to go as her Lord commanded her. **The church will not grow if the church does not go.** Statistically, the church is not growing as much as she’s shrinking; most new members are not new converts but transplants from neighboring churches or family relocations. This should get our attention – consider our own church, what are we doing to bring in new converts, how much emphasis do we place on evangelism? Do we even care? For the most part I believe we want to, but we do not have the power within ourselves to make a difference. This underscores the importance of and necessity for the baptism of the Holy Spirit – without Him we will not see God’s people revived or the lost awakened! Consider the following account from the People’s Republic of China.

³*Christians Must Evangelize - In the People’s Republic of China, the largest nation in the world and a billion people strong, is what is called the Three-Self Church. That is the state-approved church. Several of us from Wooddale, a couple of years ago, were in Beijing, and we went to one of the services of one of the Three-Self Churches. It was an old building, built around the turn of the last century. We had a translator there. There were hymns sung, some of them were to western tunes which we knew. They read the Bible. They had prayers. There was a sermon, a Bible teaching, that I thought was fine. But they’re not allowed to evangelize. That’s part of the deal with the state. “You can do your thing as long as your thing doesn’t include persuading somebody else.” There are about 50 million Christians in the People’s Republic of China who have chosen not to be part of the Three-Self Church, and meet in house churches, because they’re convinced you can’t be a Christian unless you evangelize. They say that the two go together; and if you don’t evangelize, you’re not a Christian. They would say that those who are in the Three-Self church are really not Christians, as far as the New Testament definition is concerned. —Leith Anderson, “Making More Disciples,” Preaching Today, Tape No. 165. See: Matthew 10:7; Matthew 28:19; John 4:35; Acts 5:20.*

Finally, let me leave you with this question. Where are you? Are you sitting right where the devil wants you or are you headed to your next brief stop along the evangelism highway – where God wants you?

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References:

Unless otherwise noted scripture references are taken from the NKJV

¹Robertson McQuilken, *The Great Omission*:

²Warren Wiersbe’s “Be” Series: *Old & New Testaments*

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