

Dirty Dozen Dead Men Walking - The 12 Apostles Plus One

Taking an interlude from The Life and Death of Mr. Badman, this Sunday's message was entitled; **Dirty Dozen Dead Men Walking - The 12 Apostles Plus One**. The title may seem inappropriate, but as you read today's review, you'll understand the context of it. It is a deep and profound topic in which we're probably only skimming the surface today.

Let's start by reading **I Corinthians 4:9-13** in the Amplified Bible; "*For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*" This was written by the Apostle Paul, the 'Plus One' in our title. Paul, together with the 12 Apostles (Disciples) are our heroes of faith, yet Paul uses these vivid words to portray themselves and their circumstances. At a glance, it doesn't look to inviting to want to live like them, be one of them, identify with them, hang out with them or be called a Christian like them does it? The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals that as they were, so we ought to live. Do you still want to be a Christian? Have you counted the cost?

I'd like to highlight a few things from Matthew Henry's Commentary on this scripture. He says; "*Paul and his fellow-apostles were exposed to great hardships. Never were any men in this world so hunted and worried. The general meaning is that the apostles were exposed to continual danger of death, and that of the worst kinds, in the faithful discharge of their office. God had set them forth, brought them into view, as the Roman emperors brought their combatants into the arena, the place of show, though not for the same purposes. They did it to please the populace, and humour their own vanity, and sometimes a much worse principle. The apostles were shown to manifest the power of divine grace, to confirm the truth of their mission and doctrine, and to propagate religion in the world*

***Note.** The faithful ministers and disciples of Christ should contentedly undergo any thing for his sake and honour.*

***Note.** All Christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others who are yet engaged in the same warfare. The standard-bearers in an army are most struck at. So ministers in a time of persecution are commonly the first and greatest sufferers.*

They were forced to labour with their own hands to get subsistence, and had so much, and so much greater, business to mind, that they could not attend enough to this, to get a comfortable livelihood, but were exposed to hunger, thirst, and nakedness—many times wanted meat, and drink, and clothes. They were driven about the world, without having any fixed abode, any stated habitation. Poor circumstances indeed, for the prime ministers of our Saviour's kingdom to have no house nor home, and to be destitute of food and raiment! But yet no poorer than his who had not where to lay his head."

Luke 9:58 says; "*And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* Jesus, after he was baptized by John the Baptist, started his public ministry. Up until then, he more than likely lived at home with his parents and siblings working as a carpenter. But entering into his approximate 3 year ministry, he depended on the gifts, provision and sustenance of those who both followed him and provided for him. Through the power of the Holy Spirit He accomplished all His Father wanted Him to do, likewise, we can only do all that the Father wants us to do by the infilling of the Holy Spirit

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and with his power at work in us. Jesus didn't have an issue with that man wanting to follow him, but he let him know what the cost of being a disciple and follower would cost him.

Matthew Henry continues saying; *"They were treated as men not fit to live, perikatharmata. It is reasonably thought by the critics that an allusion is here made to a common custom of many heathen nations, to offer men in sacrifice in a time of pestilence, or other like grievous calamity. These were ordinarily the vilest of men, persons of the lowest rank and worst character.*

They were the common-sewer into which all the reproaches of the world were to be poured. To be the off-scouring of any thing is bad, but what is it to be the off-scouring of all things! How much did the apostles resemble their Master, and fill up that which was behind of his afflictions, for his body's sake, which is the church!

They returned blessings for reproaches, and entreaties and kind exhortations for the rudest slanders and defamation, and were patient under the sharpest persecutions.

Note, The disciples of Christ, and especially his ministers, should hold fast their integrity, and keep a good conscience, whatever opposition of hardships they meet with from the world. Whatever they suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts, of their Lord. They must be content, with him and for him, to be despised and abused."

Jesus identifies his disciples and gives them these instructions in **Matthew 10:1-4**, *"Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority and power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Now these are the names of the twelve apostles (special messengers, personally chosen representatives): first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew (Nathanael); Thomas and Matthew (Levi) the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus (Judas, not Iscariot); Simon the Cananaean (Zealot), and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him."* These men, even being weak, faithless, denying Jesus and forsaking him when he was arrested, later became our heroes and willingly gave their lives for him. Let's read about how each of their lives ended. This quotes are taken from Fox's Book of Martyrs.

Peter

"Among many other saints, the blessed apostle Peter was condemned to death, and crucified, as some do write, at Rome; albeit some others, and not without cause, do doubt thereof. Hegesippus saith that Nero sought matter against Peter to put him to death; which, when the people perceived, they entreated Peter with much ado that he would fly the city. Peter, through their importunity at length persuaded, prepared himself to avoid. But, coming to the gate, he saw the Lord Christ come to meet him, to whom he, worshipping, said, "Lord, whither dost Thou go?" To whom He answered and said, "I am come again to be crucified." By this, Peter, perceiving his suffering to be understood, returned into the city. Jerome saith that he was crucified, his head being down and his feet upward, himself so requiring, because he was (he said) unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the Lord was."

Andrew

"Was the brother of Peter. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations; but on his arrival at Edessa he was taken and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground. Hence the derivation of the term, St. Andrew's Cross."

James the Great

"The next martyr we meet with, according to St. Luke, in the History of the Apsotles' Acts, was James the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of John, and a relative of our Lord; for his mother Salome was cousin-german to the Virgin Mary. It was not until ten years after the death of Stephen that the second martyrdom took place; for no

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sooner had Herod Agrippa been appointed governor of Judea, than, with a view to ingratiate himself with them, he raised a sharp persecution against the Christians, and determined to make an effectual blow, by striking at their leaders. The account given us by an eminent primitive writer, Clemens Alexandrinus, ought not to be overlooked; that, as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by the apostle's extraordinary courage and undauntedness, and fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian, and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone. Hence they were both beheaded at the same time. Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Savior he was ready to drink. Timon and Parmenas suffered martyrdom about the same time; the one at Philippi, and the other in Macedonia. These events took place A.D. 44."

John

"The "beloved disciple," was brother to James the Great. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him. From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death."

Philip

"Was born at Bethsaida, in Galilee and was first called by the name of "disciple." He labored diligently in Upper Asia, and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified, A.D. 54."

Bartholomew

"Preached in several countries, and having translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India, he propagated it in that country. He was at length cruelly beaten and then crucified by the impatient idolaters."

Thomas

"Called Didymus, preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, where exciting the rage of the pagan priests, he was martyred by being thrust through with a spear."

Matthew

"Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less. The scene of his labors was Parthia, and Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60."

James the Less

"Is supposed by some to have been the brother of our Lord, by a former wife of Joseph. This is very doubtful, and accords too much with the Catholic superstition, that Mary never had any other children except our Savior. He was elected to the oversight of the churches of Jerusalem; and was the author of the Epistle ascribed to James in the sacred canon. At the age of ninety-four he was beat and stoned by the Jews; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club."

Jude

"The brother of James, was commonly called Thaddeus. He was crucified at Edessa, A.D. 72."

Simon

"Surnamed Zelotes, preached the Gospel in Mauritania, Africa, and even in Britain, in which latter country he was crucified, A.D. 74."

Matthias

"Of whom less is known than of most of the other disciples, was elected to fill the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded."

Matthew 10:5-10 says, "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. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,

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raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food."

Luke 10:1-12 shows Jesus sending out 70 disciples now with the same instructions and then later in verses **17-20** it says; *"The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like [a flash of] lightning. Listen carefully: I have given you authority [that you now possess] to tread on serpents and scorpions, and [the ability to exercise authority] over all the power of the enemy (Satan); and nothing will [in any way] harm you. Nevertheless do not rejoice at this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."* This is a HUGE key that many miss. Jesus warns them not to get caught up in the 'wow' factor - as many do today also - but to REJOICE that they're saved and born again! The souls mankind is the only thing will inherit eternal life. Yes, Christians will be rewarded in heaven for what they've done on earth, but the greatest thing we can do on earth - like the disciples of old - is to win souls...no matter the cost.

Mark 13:11-13, *"But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."* **Matthew 5:11-12**, *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

John 15:19-21, *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."*

The Christian walk comes with persecutions. They may vary from place to place and country to country, but guaranteed, the preaching of the gospel will be offensive to those who are perishing. Today, there are barbaric and gruesome persecutions taking place around the world to Christians. You may have persecution from your family, friends, co-workers, towns or cities if you're sharing Jesus Christ, but don't be disheartened. Don't think you're doing something wrong if people get offended with you because of the gospel. It's par for the course! Do we like it - of course not. But our greater joy is that it's God's will that none should perish to live eternity separated from Him.

I'd encourage you to also read, **John 20:19-23**, **Mark 16:14-18**, and **Matthew 28:16-20**.

Where do you get the power to be a witness, to endure persecutions and to overcome? It's only through the power of the Holy Spirit! **Acts 1:4-8** says, *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

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2 Corinthians 4:7-11, *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."* The world tells us to look after our own interests and flesh as a priority, but the Apostle Paul was quite willing to lay everything down, even his flesh, for the gospel to be preached.

Romans 8:35-39 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* You have persecutions that want to thwart the calling and the election on your life, but the only one that will stop it is you yourself. The Apostles are a prime example of fighting through everything to fulfill the calling on their lives. There are no excuses.

Colossians 1:24-25, *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God."*

1 Corinthians 15:3-11, *"For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to [that which] the Scriptures [foretold], and that He was buried, and that He was [bodily] raised on the third day according to [that which] the Scriptures [foretold], and that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, but some have fallen asleep [in death]. Then He was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and last of all, as to one untimely (prematurely, traumatically) born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least [worthy] of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I [at one time] fiercely oppressed and violently persecuted the church of God. But by the [remarkable] grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not without effect. In fact, I worked harder than all of the apostles, though it was not I, but the grace of God [His unmerited favor and blessing which was] with me. **So whether it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed and trusted in and relied on with confidence.**"* Paul says that he labored more than all the apostles, he still recognized that it was a corporate work of the church and not one individual that led them to salvation. He clarifies this in **I Corinthians 3:6-9**; *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor."*

In summary, the Apostles were dirty because that's how the world and ungodly perceived them. But they were washed the purest of white and the cleanest of clean in the crimson blood of Jesus Christ. They partook not of the earthly riches but of the greatest riches laid up in heaven - the souls of men and women that they evangelized. They were dead to the things of earth. Their true riches - which are your true riches - were the kingdom of God with true treasures. What does that look like? It's salvation, righteousness, peace, joy, servanthood, it's within you, it's of the Holy Spirit, it's not of this world, it causes you to hear the word, understand it and bear fruit because of it; it grows in you like a mustard seed; it multiplies in you like leaven; you give up everything for it like the hidden treasure and the costly pearl; it's forgiveness; it's childlike!

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All of the Apostles were martyred. This testifies that they were dead men walking but what really was their testimony was that they lived a crucified life, dead to the things of this world and anything that would hinder the preaching of the gospel and the forward building of the church of Christ.

Although these Apostles looked like the tail and not the head, they conquered spiritual kingdoms , evangelized the world and we still preach from their words and life experience! We're not preaching martyrdom or taking an oath of poverty but wanting to be clear that being a follower of Christ Jesus, being his disciple is mirroring all that Jesus taught and the Apostles did. They are the trail blazers that we follow. They didn't pay the price so we could walk a life of ease, Jesus said they wouldn't and he says the same to us today. We do all through the power of the Holy Spirit in us. The temporal things of this earth will not be following you to heaven; not a stitch of clothing, not your earthly wealth, not your prominence or prestige, nothing. Not even St. Francis of Assisi who took a vow of poverty could take his cloak to heaven. You're born again spirit man will inherit eternal life, nothing else.

So how did the "Plus One" - Paul the Apostle die? It says in Fox's Book of Martyrs; *" Paul, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labors in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under Nero. Abdias, declareth that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptised at His sepulcher. This done, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword."*

Galatians 2:20; *"I have been crucified with Christ [that is, in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body I live by faith [by adhering to, relying on, and completely trusting] in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

Please watch these two compelling videos; [World Watch List 2017 by Open Doors](#); and [Pray For The Persecuted](#).