

**Introduction:**

- The book of Acts church was rooted and grounded in a DNA that was apostolic (it was influenced by apostles). The early church was founded on Apostles and Prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone or chief stone in the birth of the first church.
- This apostolic DNA, imparted to the church by Jesus Christ through the apostles set the early church on the cutting edge of society. This cutting edge anointing enabled them to turn the world upside down.
- Review:
  - Wk #1 - Our goal is to turn the world upside down! Acts 17:6. To cause a disturbance.
  - To do that, we must be sent. That was the subject of last week's message. God's people have always been sent (from Abram to Jesus to today's apostles), they are most beautiful to others and to God when sent, and the church is most compelling to the lost when sent grace rests upon them.
  - Any of you feeling sent this morning? Here are several areas right now that we so 'sent' anointing in (need filled in FCC): Wednesday night nursery, and more help on Sunday mornings. Video, projection, ushers, greeters, building and grounds maintenance.
- What do you receive when apostolic grace is flowing into the church?
  - You receive the opportunity to turn the world up side down! To create a God filled disturbance.
  - You receive the opportunity of living with a 'sent thing' on your inside. I have a purpose, I am sent by God. I live for Him alone. That does something to the heart; it gives passion to one's faith.
  - I want to talk about a third benefit we receive today. The benefit of walking, not just as a Christian, but as an Ambassador of God. IE. Without this grace, the local church looks like Capital Hill. It lives for itself, forgets who it is representing, fails in it missions. It only cares about itself, stays with in its four walls, fails to bring Kingdom influence into the community in which it lives.
- 1 Cor 16:4 *For the present, I'm staying right here in Ephesus. A huge door of opportunity for good work has opened up here. (There is also mushrooming opposition.)* Message Bible. Ambassadors live with three things always before them: opportunity, obligation, opposition. For example:
  - "Jim had a passion for God, a love for people, and a burden to communicate the gospel. But he wrestled with the question of how to bring the message of Christ into a setting that seemed so far from him. How could he help people see and embrace the truth when they had so little biblical understanding? The barriers seemed insurmountable. The task appeared virtually impossible. Even with all of the obstacles in front of him, Jim knew he had to try. God had given him a vision to make a difference in the lives of these men and women. For starters, he shaved his head right down to the skin, except for one patch of hair that he let grow long. Not only that, he began wearing it in a pigtail and then dyed it a different color so that he could fit in with those he was trying to reach. He also gave up his suit and tie and began to dress like the people he was trying to reach. He changed his eating patterns. He worked hard to learn new vocabulary and expressions, in the hopes that he would be able to effectively convey biblical truth in their everyday street language. Jim didn't do all this from a distance. He actually moved into the neighborhood with these people. He tried to become their friend. This wasn't easy because of their non-Christian lifestyles and their outright rejection of his message. Jim paid the price of loneliness, weariness, and discouragement, along with criticism from many Christians. He also lived with the daily rejection of most of those he wanted to reach. And he did this year after year. Jim owned the mission." His life is a powerful illustration of an Ambassador sent to a dark country against the odds to turn it up side down for Jesus. (underline Tim comment) And today, generations later, countless people from the neighborhoods he worked so hard to reach have come to saving faith. Is it worth taking risks to reach lost people with the love of Jesus? Is it right to proclaim the gospel in ways that breaks a few paradigms, pushes back a few boundaries, and ruffles a few feathers? If you're not sure, you might want to ask the hundreds of

thousands of Chinese Christians who have been touched, directly or indirectly, by Jim – or, as he’s more widely known, James Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission over a century ago” (this story adapted from Building a Contagious Church by Mark Mittelberg, Zondervan: 2000, pages 32-33).

### 1. Ambassadors See The Opportunity

- a. Hudson Taylor saw the opportunity in China; it was dark concerning the Gospel. He was compelled to go-sent. He went representing the Kingdom and before he died, hundreds of missionaries were on the field in China. Those Christians are everywhere in China!
- b. Let looks at 1 Cor 16: 4 Paul is staying in Ephesus and he sees before him a wide open opportunity. What is that opportunity? What was Paul seeing?
  - i. Ephesus was not exactly a place where most Christians would want to settle. It was a big city, in fact a major city in the eastern Mediterranean area. It was a financial & commercial center & a very religious city. It boasted one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The Temple of Diana was there with all its gross immorality & legalized prostitution. In fact, that was a part of their worship of the goddess Diana. It was a city where people were superstitious & believed in magic. They were constantly looking for palm readers & fortune tellers to guide their lives. It was not a place where Christians would normally want to live. But when Paul looked at Ephesus, he saw the hundreds of thousands of people going about their daily activities, and he said, "There is an open door here & I guess I’ll stay on a while longer." He saw the opportunity that was there. When the apostles grace gets upon the local church it see the opportunity! “This place is so dark the light has to work!” What are you seeing in Brevard County? What are you seeing in your school, community, workplace. When apostolic grace gets on the local church it sees darkness differently. It therefore has to act because it is sent!
  - ii. The church that lives expressing apostolic grace, sees the gross darkness and says in its heart, “What an opportunity to turn that place up side down! Or, “What an opportunity to cause a glorious disturbance with the the light.” Because it has a sense of mission on its inside, it says, “That is just the place God is looking for! I believe I will stay here not run away.” Eph 6:20
- c. Ambassadors for the Kingdom of God are naturally looking for opportunities to advance the Kingdom. Are you naturally doing that? Maybe you need to get some of the grace of the apostle upon/in you. Let me say it again, Ambassadors are looking for Kingdom opportunities!
  - i. This is not a requirement just for full time ministers.
  - ii. It is engineers in the market place.
  - iii. It is for students in the classrooms.
  - iv. When the grace of the apostle is on the local church it is looking for opportunity to establish a Kingdom beachhead, build a Kingdom community, and look for more opportunity. We need Kingdom people in government, on school boards, in sports, in entertainment. Take a look around, see any darkness? It is yours for the taking! Ie. Handcuff illustration.

Not only do Ambassadors See the Opportunity...

### 2. Ambassadors Experience Obligation

- a. An ambassador duty is to represent another. 2 Cor 5:20 *So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us,... “Come back to Christ.”* *apóstolos* denotes one who is legally charged to represent the person and cause of another<sup>1</sup>. Let me break this down just looking at the definition of apostle as given in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

<sup>1</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

- i. Ambassadors are given full authority of the sender to carry his mission, requests and desire. They only have authority for that. Nehemiah 2:7,8. He was sent by the King Artaxerxes, and was giving letters (authority) to pass through the region and to gather resources to rebuild Jerusalem.
  - ii. Ambassadors are legally charged/bound to represent another person who is sending them. Ie. Abraham's servant became an ambassador when he was sent to find Isaac a wife. Meaning he only had authority to do what he was sent to do. Nothing more, nothing less.
  - iii. Ambassadors are commissioned representatives. Commissioned is a powerful word because it communicates expectation of a specific mission. Ie. The great commission: *Go make disciples of all nations...* Commitment implies responsibility!
  - iv. Ambassadors are carriers of the King's message. This requires two things that church must get back with strength: 1. Service 2. Humility. Ambassadors are in service to their King. They have no rights of their own and that takes humility!
  - v. Ambassadors oversee the safety of their citizens in the region to which they are sent. IE. Paul received offering for Saints in Jerusalem who were being persecuted. He wrestled with principalities and powers in prayer.
  - vi. Ambassadors must report back. A sent one must always report back as to what is done, being done or accomplished.
- b. A good ambassador will always feel urgency! Why?
- i. Ambassadors represent the voice of another. It is one of the definitions of an apostle, one who is sent on behalf of another.
  - ii. They have been empowered by the sender to accomplish a task.
  - iii. Sent ones have a unique relationship
    - 1. Jn 20:21 As Father sent me *apostelos* so I send you *pempo*. The word *pempo* at times is used synonymously with *apostelos* but *pempo* is a sending that occurs because of relationship. *pémpō*, which stresses the fact of sending, by its relating of sender and sent<sup>2</sup> Ie. Jesus as the Son is sent. vs. in parable servants are sent then finally the son whom they kill. We get saved we become sons of God and likewise sent out of relationship.
    - 2. IE. The summer that my mother had a hysterectomy, my father sent me to the field because he had to be with mom. I was given complete authority. I was commissioned a job. I had to report back. But, there was an urgency like never before because this time I was sent as a son to the field not a servant. Jesus said, to His disciples, I no longer call you servants but friends. They did not realize it then but Jesus just 'upped' the ante!

Not only do Ambassadors see opportunity and Experience Obligation

### 3. Ambassadors Live with Opposition

- a. As an ambassador, you are a foreigner. That makes you a stranger in a strange land with strange language and customs. Therefore, you have to expect/not be surprised when men stare, ridicule, or mock you.
  - i. *I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners* NLT 1 Peter 1:1
  - ii. *He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as "foreigners in the land."* NLT 1 Peter 1:17
  - iii. *Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. <sup>12</sup> Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors.* NLT 1 Peter 2:11

<sup>2</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

- b. As an ambassador, you do not represent the nation you are in, therefore you do not have in mind what they have in mind so there is naturally opposition, resistance, and even hatred.
- i. Dan 11:2 *He will flatter and win over those who have violated the covenant. But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him.* NLT The antichrist who represents the spirit of the world does not have in mind the things of God. Therefore he will be resisted by the Saints.
  - ii. Wesleyan Methodist missionary, James Calvert (1813-1892), committed his life to reaching the indigenous peoples of the Fijian Islands. It is widely reported that upon his voyage, the ship's captain warned him to turn back, saying, "You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages." Calvert purportedly replied, "We died before we came here." Where is that kind of heart in the church today?
- c. As an ambassador, you must fight the spirit of fear to walk in faith.
- i. Joshua and Caleb in Numbers 13. They are of the Kingdom of God. The land looks good to all 12 spies but only two have faith to take it. They all had the anointing to break through in the new land but only two believed it. We are called to be atmosphere changers and Apostles do just that!
  - ii. If you are going into the realms of darkness as a light, do not think for a moment that you will not be opposed. But know this 2 Cor 2:14 *In Messiah, In Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade!*" Message

### Conclusion:

- The apostle brings a pioneering spirit. He sees the opportunities in the darkness and as a representative of the King of Kings says, "I win for the Lamb that was slain the rewards of his sufferings!"
- Listen to the words of these apostles:
  - Lord, give me Scotland, or I die. John Knox (1514-1572), Scottish clergyman and Protestant Reformer
  - I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep, I dreamed of these things, and when I awoke, the first thing I thought of was this great work. – David Brainerd (1718-1747), American missionary to the Native Americans.
  - Lord, give me souls or take my soul. – George Whitefield (1714-1770), Leader of the "Great Awakening" in Europe and the new American colonies.
  - Here let me burn out for God. – Henry Martyn (1781-1812), missionary to India.
  - I am very tired, but must go on ... A fire is in my bones ... Oh God, what can I say? Souls! Souls! Souls! My heart hungers for souls! – General William Booth (1829-1912), British Methodist and founder of The Salvation Army.

What would the church look today if it got this grace back upon it? What would you look like?