

Grace and Apostleship From the Risen Christ

by G.W. North

The apostles received a new calling and anointing from the risen Christ, with a new objective and a new power to live Christ's life.

Scripture: John 20:21, Romans 1:5

Topics: "Apostleship", "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes that Paul and the other apostles received grace and apostleship from the risen Christ, marking a significant transformation in their roles after His resurrection. He explains that their apostleship was renewed and expanded, highlighting the importance of the Holy Spirit's anointing, which they had not received during their initial calling. North draws attention to the distinction between their previous and current status, suggesting that their former calling was not permanent and could be forfeited, as exemplified by Judas. The sermon underscores that apostles are primarily devoted to Christ, receiving their authority and mission directly from Him, and that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is essential for fulfilling their commission. Ultimately, North calls for a spirit of holiness to permeate the lives and preaching of the apostles and believers alike.

Transcript

Something else emerges at this point also, which is very relevant to our study, namely this:-- Paul, who wrote this epistle, claims that both he and others received grace and apostleship from the risen Christ. He does not name the others, but there can be little doubt that he intended his readers to understand that he meant all the apostles then living. This seems the more certain in view of the statement which he made to the Corinthians, in which he embraces all the apostles, including himself, in the all-inclusive word 'us', 'I think God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death'. In the light of these texts Paul's statement to the Romans is very remarkable, for he is saying that all the apostles were given apostleship and the grace for it from the risen Christ. This can only mean that each one of those who were appointed apostles while Christ was on earth was re-appointed by Him when He rose from the dead.

This sets the whole matter of apostleship in a new light altogether. It suggests that there was a great difference between the state and status of apostles before Christ died and rose again, and their state and status afterwards. It also makes perfectly clear that no calling and installment in office by the Lord is beyond or impossible of forfeiture. A moment's reflection to consider the case of Judas is sufficient to confirm this. He was a chosen apostle with gifts and graces equal to all the other apostles, yet in the end

he was demoted and rejected, and finally took his own life. Perhaps more to the point than this, according to John, when the Lord revealed Himself to His disciples (now called brethren by Him) in the room where they were hiding from the Jews in fear, He first of all very deliberately preached peace to them; He wanted them free from fear. Shortly also He breathed on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit, but before doing so He said, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you'. Then, and not until then, did He breathe the Holy Spirit upon them and re-commission them.

This could justify the assumption that, for some reason, perhaps by forsaking the Lord, all those men had either: (1) forfeited their former calling; or (2) had been demoted from it by Him; or (3) had only been called on a temporary basis in the first place. They were never told so by the Lord, but neither at any point had Jesus led them to believe that their calling was permanent. However, when He arose the Lord went specially to them to send them out to the world as the Father had sent Him. He stood among them that day as one re-sent, His calling renewed, His mission expanded; to Him it was a second sending, a re-appointment to an apostleship of greater magnitude, with a new objective. This being so for Him, surely this must have been so for those men as well; their former apostleship had been so bound up with His own, and just as surely when that terminated so did theirs. Likewise, when the Lord's apostleship recommenced so did theirs, only this time on a different footing by different means unto different ends.

By this time He had been declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, and those men received their re-commissioning and re-sending from Him in the power and authority of the new position to which He had now attained. This time the vital factor missing from their first calling was available for them and was included in their appointment to fulfil the Lord's purpose. This was entirely new, the first precious anointing of the Holy Spirit from Him -- they had neither received Him nor this anointing when they were first selected three years earlier. Their sending forth upon that occasion was of a quite different character. He sent them out mainly as heralds on a different errand with a far less potent gospel; their business was to prepare the way for the personal coming of Christ who was following in their footsteps. At that time everything was limited by God's intentions, by Christ's instructions, by territorial restrictions, by an incomplete gospel, and by the flesh. That is why the Lord groaned within Himself for the accomplishment of God's purposes with Him; until these were completed He could not go for those 'others' for whom He longed. In order to do this He came to those men in private to link them up with Himself again, and by them accomplish His Father's will. He re-established them that they should be His apostles indeed.

Apostleship is so distinctly personal; apostles are apostles of Jesus Christ, as each of them who speaks or writes of this in the New Testament so emphatically states; they are not apostles of the Church but of Him. They are set in the body to be members of it, but their devotion is primarily, if not only, to Him; they receive grace and apostleship from Him. It is also of note that, when the Lord breathed on the apostles, they were not baptized in the Spirit into His body (they still awaited that); they were anointed only. They were not yet empowered with the power or ability (dunamis) of the Spirit as Mary had been to bring forth the life of Jesus in their flesh; Christ was not yet formed in them to any degree or in any realm; the power they received in that room that day was the power of authority only. This was the reason why Christ so emphatically told them to wait for the power from on high; they were not to go rushing off to fulfil their commission until the great baptism of power and life -- the power or ability of the highest -- should come upon them. This was the promise of the Father which would clothe them, that is, clothe their spirits with the power of life, enabling them to live His life while still in the flesh of their mortal bodies.

With great skill and wisdom, as well as with deliberate intention, the Lord Jesus separated these two great occasions by fifty days. He had purposed in His heart that the Church He was going to build should be founded upon the apostles and the prophets, Himself being the chief corner stone, so before He commenced to build it He reinstated and marked out the apostles. There must be no room for mistake about this; what He did must not be assumed to be either His usual way of appointing apostles, or the established order of anointing servants or of baptizing sons. It must be understood that the whole New Testament period before Pentecost and the events thereof were preparation for that day when the baptism of life should be administered to them by Him from on high. Since Pentecost the natural order is first the life baptism or the power, then the anointing or the authorization to serve. But it must be understood that although this may be the apparent logical order, for His own purposes, God may vary it if He pleases, and sometimes He does.

There is no scriptural, spiritual, legal or logical reason why God should not do everything in one all-inclusive experience if He pleases, as in Paul's conversion for instance. There are no grounds for supposing that, following this experience, Paul needed or was granted any further major experience in order to equip him or qualify him for service, or to ordain Him a minister of Christ. Many assumptions have been made and theories advanced, such as the use of prepositions and tenses, or the citation of obscure texts about happenings in Arabia, in order to try to substantiate unprovable assertions, all to no profit, and better left unsaid if the purpose for saying them is to establish a system of doctrine in order to bind men's minds to it. What further purposes and possibilities may lie beyond that, and whatever may be the outcome, is not our concern here. What is certain is that the apostles of the first generation went out to preach 'the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ' whom He raised from the dead. Those apostles were sent out as sons enslaved, free to serve according to the same spirit of holiness by whom their Lord was conceived and brought to birth, to live and die and rise again. There must and will be then, about all our lives and our preaching, a spirit of holiness, holiness must pervade all.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gw-north/grace-and-apostleship-from-the-risen-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net