

Two Runners.



2 Samuel 18:19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, “Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies.” And Joab said to him, “You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead.” Then Joab said to the Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, “But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite.” So Joab said, “Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready? But whatever happens,” he said, “let me run.” So he said to him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, “If he is alone, there is news in his mouth.” And he came rapidly and drew near. Then the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, “There is another man, running alone!” And the king said, “He also brings news.” So the watchman said, “I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok.” And the king said, “He is a good man, and comes with good news.” So Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, “All is well!” Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, “Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!” The king said, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Ahimaaz answered, “When Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about.” And the king said, “Turn aside and stand here.” So he turned aside and stood still. Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, “There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you.” And the king said to the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” So the Cushite answered, “May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man!”

Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!”

Here we have a tale of two messengers. Both were able and suitable for the job of carrying the King's messages. Both were available and willing to go on the trusted mission. The only difference between them was that the one was chosen for this particular important task of delivering the report from the commander of the host of the King. The other was not chosen. One went, the other was sent. The chosen messenger was entrusted with the details of the message to be delivered. The other messenger was not given these particulars but merely ran with the best he knew.

In the Kingdom of God there are no volunteers for particular functions. Rather the commander Jesus the anointed King chooses and sends His servants.

The messenger was sent to the one who was waiting and watching for him. David did not know in advance who would be sent, but he set a watchman to look out for him. God sends His messengers to those who are waiting and watching for the word from the Lord.

Mat 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said he to his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. And when he had called to him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles (apostle in Greek means sent one) are these; The first, Simon, who is

called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not: 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, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till you go from there. And when you come into a house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Truly I say to you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.

Here we see the Lord of the harvest choosing and sending messengers from among His disciples. Those Jesus sends He gives His credentials in signs and wonders so that those hearing His message through them know He has truly sent them and that their message is His message which He has given to them. He is the one who gives the message to His messengers. They are not required to research or create their own message. If they did then they would no longer be His messengers.

Throughout history there have been self appointed or volunteer messengers who have ran with a message for their own, no doubt genuine, reasons. Trouble is that those who run with a message that is not given to them by Jesus himself go with the best they know, which will not be the same as that which is by revelation of Jesus Christ.

In the extract of Cushi and Ahmaaz the one who went of his own accord did not have the whole story. Those who run with a gospel message received from men may have some vital element missing.

We have an example in ;

Acts 18:24 : A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

In the kingdom of God it is the head – Jesus the King - who assigns duties to the other members of the body of Christ.

As the good news is the power of God to the salvation of those that believe it, it is imperative that this message of repentance and remission of sins is delivered by those sent with authority to remit sins in the name of Jesus Christ through baptism. The messengers and the message are equally sent by the Lord of the harvest.

John 20:21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be to you: as the Father has sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed, and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit: Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them; whosoever sins you retain, they are retained.

This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit and three thousand who gladly received the message were baptised in the name of Jesus the Christ for the remission of their sins.

This is the desired consequence of those sent by the Lord Jesus Christ sharing the message of repentance and remission of sins. It should result in those who believe this message having their sins remitted and them being added to the body of Christ.

Act 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with

Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews:

Gal 1:6 I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if anyone preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brothers, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles (sent ones) and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

In the extract from 2 Samuel David was emotionally involved in the un-folding drama. The protagonist and source of the trouble was his own son Absalom. He was being un-realistic about the chances of the rebel being kept alive, even though understandably he wished for this with all his heart.

Our own historical, personal and emotional affinities with people, situations, dogmas and practices may well make us reluctant to hear the Holy Spirit authored report concerning the things He wishes to address. Sometimes only a prophet will do. To those who desire to do the will of the Father in heaven, the veracity of any prophecy or teaching will be made known by the Spirit.

Sound doctrine does not come by study, but by listening to the voice of Jesus, as He speaks to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit – the anointing Who teaches us all things. In the universal assembly which is the body of Christ, men and women who are prophet or teacher gifts may be used to convey the current heavenly report on situations which merit them.

One Example in scripture is Paul confronting Peter and Barnabas at Antioch;

Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, if you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

This was not a matter of opinions, but a battle for the truth of the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we see that none of us are immune from being turned to ‘another gospel’ by human influence and teaching. Fortunately we can all be corrected if we will receive the truth from whoever the Spirit uses to deliver the verdict. Similarities can be drawn between this episode and David’s encounter with the prophet Nathan – you are that man!

The branches abiding in the vine which is Jesus, who bear fruit, are pruned by the Father, that they might be more fruitful than they would otherwise be. He will use prophets and teachers to do this still today.

Galatians 2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favouritism to no

man—for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Paul is here speaking of the message he had been running with – apostle is the Greek name for one who is sent and runs with the king's message. As the message he had received by revelation direct from Jesus had come under attack and was everywhere challenged, he checked it out with Peter and the other apostles who were apostles before him. Did they have the same message? They did. There is only one gospel that is the power of God to salvation to those who believe it, the one given by Jesus Christ to whoever He may send.

Prophets and Teachers within the local assembly.

In the assembly of the disciples of Jesus Christ at Antioch we are told there were prophets and teachers, among them Saul and Barnabas. We may have a distorted appreciation of their important roles there.

A prophet in the assembly is not a fortune teller. They will not be dispensers of unfounded optimism. Nor yes-men to the status-quo. He or she is the Spirit's pruning shear. He is the corrector of error. Not by education, but by inspiration and Holy Spirit given revelation. And of course, this is to the immense benefit/health of both individuals concerned and the whole assembly.

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

Sadly, generally here in the West, local assemblies of the disciples of Jesus Christ are not in as healthy a state as this assembly was in Corinth when Paul wrote the above to them, even with the problems they had!

The assemblies are generally utterly broken up, with individual disciples scattered amongst various religious organisations. Not surprisingly then, the condition of many is dire. 'Saved but as through fire' comes to mind.

Many have started in the Spirit but have quickly gone on to continue in the flesh. Perhaps oblivious to how far they have fallen. Many have almost lost hope that things will ever get back to 'normal' as portrayed in the New Testament accounts.

Jesus is still Head of His assembly, His body, His bride.

The Holy Spirit still operates through ordinary folks like us in His powerful gifts.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. I returned and saw under the sun that— The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill;

If we will ask the Father earnestly in the name of Jesus Christ for the gifts of Prophets and Teachers to be operating in the assembly of Jesus Christ, we can be confident that He will send them.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but that He reveals His secret to his servants the prophets.

We are living in a time when the very good news of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ has been adulterated, truncated, divided, watered down and generally become 'another gospel'. This may be because the usual forms of the 'gospel' we hear have been through many men's hands, heads, hearts and thoughts.

We need the revelation of the good news received from Jesus Christ, the Head, delivered by those He sends rather than a version received from men propagated by self appointed preachers.

We need the message of repentance and remission of sins through the name of Jesus Christ proclaimed by those evangelists, teachers, prophets and apostles sent by Jesus Christ, in the authority of being sent in

His name, with the signs and wonders that accompany the message of salvation He authored.

John 7:16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory: but he that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

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