

Take your Bibles and turn, for the last time, to Matthew 28:16-20. I reflected upon my notes, and in October of 2002, we began our study of Matthew. Today marks the 143<sup>rd</sup> exposition of Matthew's Gospel. Today we come to the climax of this life-changing journey in Matthew's Gospel. We have discovered that the purpose of this book is to prove that Jesus Christ is the King, the Jewish King and Messiah of Israel. He was the Son of David, and we see that repeatedly in the Old Testament passages that Matthew uses to link the Lord Jesus Christ with all of the promises of the long-awaited Messiah. We also see that because of who Jesus is, we are called to faith and repentance in Him. We have seen His Kingly credentials documented in the very opening genealogy. We have seen the glory of His Shekinah when the angels came and proclaimed His birth on the hillside near Bethlehem. We have witnessed the obscurity and humility of His birth, and yet we saw Him even as King when the Persian kingmakers came to give Him homage. We heard the herald of the King, John the Baptist, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!"

We marveled as we watched the Spirit of God descend upon Jesus at His baptism. We heard the Father say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" We saw Him gain victory over Satan in the wilderness. We were amazed at the King's authority as we listened to His sermon on the Mount. We were awestruck by the miraculous power He demonstrated when He proved Himself powerful over nature, sin, Satan, demons, disease and over death itself. We learned of His glorious plan of redemption and marveled at the commissioning of the twelve ordinary men like us. We've been convicted and comforted by His parables concerning the kingdom. In His Olivet Discourse we both trembled with fear at the coming judgments, as well as rejoiced in the coming glory for those of us who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we've bowed our heads in horror and wept as we watched Him suffer and die on the cross at Calvary. And we rejoiced once again with joy inexpressible as we saw Him rise from the dead: a resurrection that guarantees ours.

And now, before He ascends back into heaven, he commissions His disciples—and us—to continue His work, which was "to seek and to save that which was lost," as He said in Luke 19:10. That is, the preaching of the gospel, an effort that is so filled with mercy and grace that, according to 1 Peter 1:12, is something that even the angels are overwhelmed with. They long to look at this whole plan of redemption. The quintessential purpose for every Christian, for our very existence, is to glorify God. And He is glorified most when He graciously redeems hell bound sinners and reconciles them to Himself. The greatest demonstration of the glory of God is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We glorify God most when we devote our lives and our resources in evangelizing the lost, in seeing people come to a saving knowledge of who He is. I would say that there is no greater priority in life than glorifying God, other than being His representatives in sharing the love of Christ with a dying world. Since man is hopelessly unable to save himself, we preach that salvation is all of grace. We believe that the gospel is revealed to us in those doctrines that most faithfully exalt God's sovereign purpose to save sinners, and in His determination to save His redeemed people by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to His glory alone. This is the climax, the pinnacle of Matthew's Gospel. This is the *sine qua non* of all that Matthew had to say. And if you miss this, you've missed the whole point of what the Spirit of God says to us through Matthew's Gospel.

Let's read the text in Matthew 28:16-20. "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and

the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

There are four essential elements necessary for us to discharge the duty that the Lord has given us in this text. There are four elements I would like you to carve into the granite of your biblical understanding. We must be:

1. Faithful to obedient worship
2. Devoted to the Lordship of Christ
3. Committed to a clear mission
4. Driven by a fearless trust

If I were to quiz you and say, regarding these four elements, how would you define them? How would you define being faithful to obedient worship? Being devoted to the Lordship of Christ – what does that mean? Being committed to a clear mission, or driven by a fearless trust, what are these? Unfortunately, I believe that most Christians would say that being faithful to obedient worship is something like showing up on Sundays, closing your eyes and swaying back and forth holding your hands up in the air as you sing to some emotional music. Friends, it’s far more than that. Most Christians have no idea what it means to be devoted to the Lordship of Christ, especially in these days of apostasy where Bible doctrine is considered passé, if not arrogant and rude and divisive. These days, people don’t know what the Lord has asked us to do and therefore don’t know how to really follow Him. Many people don’t care. Most Christians are clueless to the idea of having a clear mission, an unambiguous mission, and how to carry that out. Sadly, I believe very few people are driven by a fearless trust, because most Christians are not engaged in a battle where they simply could not survive if they did not have the Lord to empower them. So, we examine these four elements in light of the Lord’s great commission to us.

First of all, let’s see what it means to be faithful to obedient worship. In verse 16 it says, “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.” Let me give you the context here. When you consider that it would take about a week to get up to Galilee from Jerusalem, and when you consider all the events that transpired in Galilee and even the trip back to Jerusalem later on for His ascension from the Mount of Olives, and we know it was about forty days before He ascended back into heaven, according to Acts 1:3. Therefore, this commissioning that we’re reading here would have happened approximately twenty to thirty-five days after His resurrection.

You might also want to keep in mind that He was speaking to about 500 people, not just the eleven disciples. Paul indicated in 1 Corinthians 15 that there was a group of about 500 believers that the Lord met with, and we believe that this would have been this group there in Galilee. Also keep in mind that most of His followers have not seen the resurrected Christ. Most of them are still filled with fear and uncertainty. They are thinking, “My, what are we going to do now?” They lack a sense of direction, perhaps lack motivation, and they are probably filled with self-pity. They are down in the dumps, they’re depressed. Their whole world has come crashing down.

I believe there is a great lesson that can be learned as we look at what is happening here. Ask yourself what you should do when your world comes crashing down, when everything seems lost and is falling apart. What should you do? Should you run in there and turn on the television, put your thumb in your mouth, curl up in a fetal position and sleep the days away because you’re so depressed? Is that what you should do? Or maybe you should go out and spend money. Buy yourself something, that will make you

feel better. Maybe you should go to a counselor or therapist and have them say, “It’s not all that bad. You’re really a pretty good person. Cheer up!”

How about doing this the next time your world falls apart: how about becoming faithful to obedient worship? Notice that’s what’s happened here. That’s what God told them to do. He said, “I want you to proceed to the mountain which I have designated. That’s what I want you to do.” No explanation why. All we know is in verse 10 it says that He is going to see them there, “there they will see Me.” Let me digress for a moment. Maybe you feel yourself sinking in the quagmire of depression, or you feel yourself overwhelmed with a sense of “life isn’t fair” or “I’m angry” or maybe you’re feeling guilty or have some life-dominating sin, or feel that all hope is lost, and everything is dark and lonely. Having talked with thousands of people over the years, that’s what they have described. Whenever you feel that way what you must do is anything and everything you can to run and get into the presence of Christ. You’ve got to come before Him so that you can behold the face of Jesus Christ. You will see Him primarily in Scripture.

In 2 Corinthians 4:6 the Spirit of God tells us through Paul, “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” We can’t go to a designated mountain to see Him, but we can come to the mountain of the Word and we will see Him. That’s what these people did. This was the whole theme of John’s Gospel. In John 1:4-5 we read that, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

Keep this in mind now. God knew that those dejected disciples needed to see the risen Christ so that they could become faithful to obedient worship. Here you have this large congregation of about 500 people; beleaguered, fearful, confused, maybe doubting, depressed, and they proceed to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had designated. Precious people, can’t you imagine what must have been in their hearts? “Jesus has told us to come here. We haven’t seen Him, we’ve heard rumors that He’s been risen from the dead. All I know to do in the midst of my sadness, sorrow and confusion is be obedient to the simple thing that He’s asked me to do. So I’m going to go to the mountain.” Beloved, that’s what it means to be faithful to obedient worship. They were obedient to the simple command. It put them in the pathway of the divine presence of the living Christ.

Notice what happens in verse 17. “And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.” This is an electric scene. Can you imagine the inconceivable burst of emotion when somehow Jesus comes over the top of the ridge or comes out from behind the rocks? Can’t you imagine the people would have wept with joy, fallen on their faces, and the women would have cried aloud, because that’s what women do? The people would have been overwhelmed. It’s Jesus! Suddenly, all of the confusion and the sorrow and depression is gone because you’re in the presence of the living Christ. Never underestimate the awesome power and unspeakable joy of simply being in the presence of God. Never underestimate that.

There is no joy that can compare  
Nor bliss of equal share.  
Than that of standing face to face  
In the glory of His grace.

What an amazing scene. Naturally, some of them, as the text says, were doubting. If you were on the side or in the back and you saw someone walk out, well, you’re skeptical anyway because your whole world has been smashed and you’re wondering, “Is that really Jesus?” Usually when things are too good to be

true, they aren't, right? They're false. But knowing their doubts, the precious Lord Jesus, in verse 18 says He "came up and spoke to them." I am overwhelmed with the intimacy here, the loving initiation of the glorified Christ. I can see Him moving through the crowds to someone back there who's doubting. He's the omniscient Christ—He knows who they are. He moves toward them and looks them in the eye and speaks to them. He came up and He spoke to them.

As I think about this, this is not like the unapproachable, whimsical, capricious, mysterious deities of the pagans. This is the intimate Lord Jesus. This is not someone that is hard to know or hard to understand. He's going to come up and look you in the eye and speak to you, as He continues to do through His Word and through the power of His Spirit. He came up and He spoke to them. The reason He did so is because these people were faithful to obedient worship. They did what God had asked them to do. They showed up, to adore Him, praise Him, hear Him. They were obedient, they were available, they were ready, willing and able. Therefore, He appeared to them. He came up and He spoke to them. It's so sad. So many Christians never show up. They never show up. You don't see them when the Word is taught. You don't see them in private showing up before the Lord when they can humble themselves before His Word. They're just not available. When you're not available, guess what? The Lord is not going to be able to speak to you.

There was a woman I remember dealing with. She was a woman who was notorious for her explosive outbursts of anger. She was a real hothead. She had many bouts of depression. She was suicidal at times. She had been diagnosed as a manic depressive and she was on antidepressants. She got off them because she felt like they weren't doing any good. A very close relationship fell apart, a fiancé left, etc. Somehow or another the Lord brought her to me. I remember sitting down with her and one of the first things she said to me was, "I think I've lost my salvation." Obviously she was completely clueless about what Scripture teaches about salvation. But knowing, from Galatians 5 and other passages, what the "deeds of the flesh" were, I knew that if you looked at her life you could see the deeds of the flesh, and when you have those deeds of the flesh it's primarily because you're not walking in the Spirit. You are not surrendering to the Spirit of God as He reveals Himself through His Word.

So knowing this, and knowing where I needed to go with her, I asked her to describe to me her relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. At some level I'm wanting to prove to her that she's not showing up, this is the idea here. Her answer was very defensive. It was very caustic, she hemmed and hawed and her answer was as shallow as water on a plate when it comes to describing a relationship with Christ. I also knew that she seldom went to church. When she did, she attended what was basically an apostate church, so she wasn't getting any spiritual nourishment. I figured rather quickly that she was probably not even saved. When I began to approach some of those subjects she became furious. I remember sharing a passage with her, Proverbs 29:22, "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression." In other words, if you see anger, you know that that's the tip of the iceberg. We began to look at some of that and things began to go south very quickly in our conversation.

One of the things I tried to tell her that I would share with you is that when you habitually yield your body to various sins and ungodly choices, you eventually become bound by those sins. The Word of God tells us that in Romans 6:16, for example. As you become bound by those sins, you become that sinful person. I remember telling her that her issue was not that she was manic depressive or whatever, the issue, according to God, is that you're a fool. I quoted her the passage in Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." She had sowed the wind and was reaping the whirlwind. I see this all the time. People struggle with some life-dominating sin and yet they

refuse to be obedient in the simple things. They refuse to show up. Certainly she needed to show up first of all to be saved, but even beyond that for Christians. Lives that are filled with sorrow and guilt, confusion and life-dominating sins, relationships falling apart, and you wonder what the answer is. How about showing up? Being faithful in obedient worship? Running to a place where the living Christ can speak to you? Running to the place where you can be in the presence of His glory so that you can hear from Him?

Notice what He said to them in verses 18-19. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore...” Here’s where we come to the second element that is necessary for us to discharge our duty. That is to be devoted to the Lordship of Christ. At this point, Jesus is assuring the congregation that He is the sovereign, supreme Monarch over the universe. We see this theme all through Scripture. I think of Philippians 2:9 where we read how the authority was given to Him by His Father who has “highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Therefore, in light of this, He says “I want you to go.”

What an incredible encouragement this must have been to those beleaguered saints. They were facing an impossible situation in their minds. In that day and age, in that culture, even as it is in many cultures today, it was hard enough just surviving as a Christian, much less going out and proclaiming the gospel of Christ. That was really a scary thing to do. You are literally taking your life in your own hands at that point. You’ve got a message that alienates and infuriates most people. That’s why we read in 1 Corinthians 1:23, that the gospel was, “to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness.”

However, to know that you are obeying the One who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, suddenly the odds are in your advantage. It’s not even a fair fight. “We are more than conquerors” through Christ. Dear friends, please hear this. Unless you live consistently with this truth, namely that we serve the sovereign, omnipotent Ruler of the universe, unless you live consistently with this truth it will never have any meaning nor will you ever have any power. Christianity is not for some pusillanimous pansy that just wants to quote a Bible verse every now and then and sing a little hymn and show up at church now and then. Christianity is a call to arms. Anyone that is afraid to go into battle for Christ is not worthy of the Lord. Anyone that is afraid to wield the sword of the Spirit, to parry the blows of the enemy, to go out and do battle in proclaiming and protecting the truth is not worthy of the Lord. Anyone that is afraid to be rejected by family or friends, or get their feelings hurt is not worthy of the Lord. What did the Lord say? “If any man wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

In fact, in Matthew 10:34 Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” He went on to say, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me...he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” Unfortunately in our cavalier Christian culture, we are content to wander around and not get into battle with anyone regarding the gospel. I’m not saying you should go out and pick a fight. What I am saying is you should stand up for the truth and preach it with boldness and clarity, without compromise. We serve the Lord of Hosts, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. In Revelation 5:5 we read that, “He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, (who) has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” In Romans 14:9, He is the “Lord of the living and the dead.” In Acts 10:42 He is the righteous judge “whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.” That’s why He’s saying to them and to us, don’t be

afraid. Devote yourself to My Lordship. Be committed to following Me. Make a conscious choice to take up arms and follow the Master.

How do we do that? First of all, by submitting to the Spirit of God as He reveals Himself through His Word. You have to know His Word and be obedient to it. We don't go out and strap bombs on ourselves and blow up innocent people. That's not how we do battle for the Lord. Instead, what we begin with is by submitting to the Spirit of God through His Word and living out the truth of the gospel. And then, as we know the gospel and are living out the truth of His Word, we're able to, secondly, wield the sword of the Spirit with great precision as we go and battle error and protect the truth. And thirdly, we march on our knees in prayer.

He says, "Go therefore." What are we supposed to do? In verse 19 He says to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." This leads us to the third essential element necessary for us to discharge our duty. Not only must we be faithful to obedient worship and devoted to the Lordship of Christ, but thirdly we must be committed to a clear mission. There is nothing mystical here. This is not something ethereal or esoteric or mysterious. It's a straightforward, unambiguous charge. I want you to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."

I ask you, is this the priority of your life? Are you committed to this end? Let us see your check stubs and I can answer that for you. Let us see your calendar and how you spend your time and I can answer that for you. Let us see the list of men and women and boys and girls that are on your prayer list and I can answer that. Let us hear your private prayers. Let us hear the music that fills your mind and I can tell you where your priority is. Let us see the type of literature that feeds your soul and I can answer that. Let us see the ways you suffer and sacrifice for Christ. Friends, obviously God sees all of this. I fear the sting of that lash falls on my back as well as yours. So often we write a check to missions and say that's enough. Or we show up every now and then to attend Sunday school or church and say that's enough. Or we pray before meals and occasionally pray in a prayer meeting time and say that's enough.

Friends, that is so different than what the Master is asking us to do here. The Master says I want you to "Go." In fact, to get technical for a moment, the term that is used here is a Greek participle that is actually translated "having gone." This is more of an assumption than it is a command. Literally what the Lord is saying here is that He is assuming that any true believer who understands the enormous sacrifice that was made to purchase their redemption is going to be faithful to obedient worship, devoted to the Lordship of Christ, and they're going to be going. They can't help but go because they're so excited about what God has done in their life. After all, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. *Having gone*, therefore, make disciples." It's like He's saying this is a foregone conclusion. It goes without saying. Any thrice-born child of God is going to be so filled with the love and mercy and grace of Christ that love is going to be abounding more and more. They cannot contain themselves so they're going to be going. They're going to go not just to the Jew but to the Gentiles, to all nations.

Having gone, what are they supposed to do? Well, He says, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." I want to make a clarification here because there is some false doctrine that goes around from time to time and it's very prevalent in our Southern culture. A false doctrine that says that salvation is an act whereby grace is dispensed. In other words you're not saved until you're baptized. Sometimes it's called baptismal regeneration. This is a tragic error. Baptism literally means to immerse in

water. It is an act that has absolutely nothing to do with salvation. There is no dispensing of saving grace here. Those who make an association between water baptism and salvation must jettison the most basic principles of hermeneutics in order to support their position.

I might add that any time you see anyone committing a Herculean effort to torture a text to make it fit their system in one area, rest assured that you will see the same type of exegetical gymnastics committed in other areas as well. Please understand that God commanded baptism to accompany salvation, not to procure it. It's one's belief in Christ as Savior that saves them, not being immersed in water. Jesus made this so clear in Mark 16:6. He says, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." Baptism is merely a public testimony stating that one has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and is willing also to obey the Lord's command to publicly announce their faith to the community and world. To say that "I identify myself with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ." Baptism alone has never saved anyone.

Peter also made this clear at Pentecost when he answered the question, "What must I do to be saved?" In Acts 2:38 he answered that and said, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Repent, or *metanoeo* in the original language. It's a powerful term with the idea of having a radical change, from going in one direction and turning and going in another direction. A change of direction, a change of purpose, a turning from sin unto God. That's what you've got to do to be saved. He says, "Repent." That's the answer to "What must I do to be saved?" After that he says, "let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

You see, repentance is one thing, but to be baptized, especially to those people to whom Peter was preaching, that was something else. Think about it. You could repent, and that could be something very private that nobody would know about. Now all of a sudden, "You want me to be baptized? You want me to publicly tell all my family and friends that I am a follower of Jesus of Nazareth? You want me to say that in front of everybody? Do you know what that will cost me? It may cost me my life!" That's exactly why the Lord has commanded us to do that. Not that we would die, but that we would stand firm and tell the world that we are not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the book of Acts forgiveness is linked only to repentance, it's never linked to baptism. Moreover, the Bible describes some who were baptized who were not saved, as in Acts 8. It says there were others who were saved with no mention of ever being baptized, as in Luke 7. All through Scripture we see that salvation is solely by faith alone, not some ritual. Romans 10:10 says, "...with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

So Jesus calls us to go. Call people to repentance and then be baptized, which is synonymous with becoming a disciple. He's saying, in essence, "I want you to ask people to publicly affirm their love for Me, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as if to say because of my newfound faith I want everyone to know that I am a recipient of God's grace and mercy and love. Now I have been made one with the triune Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Friends, the mission of evangelism also includes more than going and baptizing, but also verse 20, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." True disciples of Christ are more than mere converts. They will be learners of the Word of God, and teachers of the Word of God. They're going to teach their children, their spouses, other people within their community and church. That's the commandment here, and that's going to take place in Sunday school classes, Bible studies, discipleship groups. It's going to come from the pulpit, from writing and music. This is to be the lifelong

preoccupation of every true believer. Quite frankly, it's going to be something that a true believer longs to do because they're so excited about what God has done. It's not to say that everybody is going to be a teacher. Not everybody is gifted in the sense of being a public proclaimer of the Word. But certainly we all have people to whom we can minister, preach, teach, and we can support other ministries that do that. That needs to be the passion of our heart. What a joy that is to see people come to a saving knowledge of Christ and then to watch them grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

I've been here about ten years, and I've watched some of you over that whole ten years, and some of you have come in at other times. It's a wonderful thing to watch how so many of you have grown in Christ, to watch your children come to faith in Christ and watch them grow in Christ. It is a thrill, it's the joy of my heart. That's what the Lord asks us to do. By the way, remember Jesus' words to His disciples a few weeks earlier in the upper room, in John 14:23-26. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." You say you love Christ. Do you keep His Word? If you don't, you'd better reevaluate your love for Christ. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We (referring to the triune Godhead) will come to him, and make Our abode with him." If you want the presence of the triune Godhead within your very existence, then keep His Word. He goes on to say, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

This is a wonderful promise. Mothers, when you're teaching your children you need to keep this in mind: that the resident truth teacher, the Holy Spirit of God, lives within you. He is going to bring to your remembrance things He taught you. Here's the problem: if you have not been in His presence, and He has not been able to teach you much, because you are too lazy and too undisciplined to study the Word of God and make it a part of your life, He's not going to have much to bring to remembrance. So you need to submit yourself to the Word of God, and as you teach others He will bring that remembrance to you and also help you in the various trials we're all going to have in life. What a wonderful promise.

Back to Matthew's Gospel, notice what else the Lord says. Not only is He going to teach us and help us teach others, but in verse 20 He says, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Beloved, this must be a promise that you hold very close to your heart, because herein is the wellspring of Christian ministry. Every faithful Christian who is faithful to this great commission of going and baptizing and teaching, any Christian that is faithful to this knows the enormous obstacles that will be theirs as a result of proclaiming and protecting the truth. There will be inevitable rejection and ridicule and persecution—and sometimes it can be severe. But again, He's saying here that as the sovereign Ruler of the Universe, I'm going to be with you. I'm going to be with you the whole way. No matter where you go. I don't care if you go to Africa, Europe, Nashville. And I don't know which of the three is worse. He's going to be with you. Friends you'll never know the power of the risen Christ until you're willing to suffer for Him.

Because of this, fourthly, you're going to be driven by a fearless trust. You'll not be able to discharge this duty unless you're driven by a fearless trust. When you're faithful to obedient worship, as these people were, and then devoted to the Lordship of Christ, and as they became committed to a clear mission, then in order to carry it out they had to be driven by this fearless trust. This is the perspective that we must have in order to carry out the great commission, in order to preach the gospel to a lost and dying world.

"I am with you always." Literally that means I'm going to be with you all the days of your life. Every day of your life I'm going to be with you, even to the end of the age, and that's a reference to His second



coming. That's when this age will be over. When I come to establish my earthly kingdom. That's the idea. I challenge you all to examine your heart in light of our Lord's great commission. Are you faithful to obedient worship? Are you devoted to the Lordship of Christ? Are you committed to a clear mission? Are you driven by a fearless trust?

I want to close with another powerful motivation that causes us to heed the Lord's command to go, to call people to repentance, to teach them all that He has commanded. That powerful motivation is the little four-letter word hell. There are many haunting texts in Scripture, and there is perhaps none more haunting than the Lord's words in John 3:36. He says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Then also in Matthew 25:46, it says that unless they repent, Jesus said, "these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

It's heartbreaking to think that so many people I know and love are going to go to hell. Perhaps some of you in this room today. Like the parable Jesus gave about the rich man and the poor man in Luke 16. The rich man was a very religious man who was absolutely certain, for a number of false reasons, that he was going to go to heaven, and he woke up in hell. As we study Scripture we see that most of the people in hell will be people that were quite certain that they would have never ended up there, very religious people. Of course in our age of apostasy, with our newly invented God that just loves everybody, the "smiley-faced Jesus," this kind of God would never send anyone to hell. No God could be that mean and vindictive. Whenever I hear that, it is a certain indication that a person doesn't understand two things: the holiness of God and the heinousness of sin. I confess I don't understand these. I understand some, but what I see is but a fraction of what God sees.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." I know some are quick to say that the word destroy means to annihilate, to cause something to cease to exist. Sometimes I wish that were true. I have to confess that if I knew that the worst that would happen to people who rejected the gospel of Christ is that they would die and go out of existence, I guess at some level I could relax a bit knowing that that's the worse they would ever experience, just extinction. But friends, the Word of God says something very different. In fact, the word destroy in the original language is never used anywhere in the New Testament to describe annihilation. That is wishful thinking that people impose upon that term. It does mean to kill, bring to nothing, render useless, to lose, to perish, to be lost, but never to go out of existence. Moreover, such an interpretation is inconsistent with other passages of Scripture.

The Word of God tells us about hell, and here is the motivation for me for evangelism. Yes, it's one thing to want to obey the Lord, and He says "Go." That's enough right there. But friends, there's another motivator, and that's hell. Because the Word of God tells me that it is a place of "weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth." In Luke 16, again in that parable, it's a place of endless torment and agony. A place of utter separation from God. There is no hope, there is no relief. In Jude 7 it's described as a place of "punishment of eternal fire." The idea is of a fire, something different than we would know, a fire that will not be able to consume but to inflict pain.

In Matthew 8:12 and 22:13 Jesus describes it as a place of "outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." It's the idea of a place of utter banishment, utter abandonment, there's nothing to bring relief, there is no hope, there is no relationship, there is utter isolation, and infinite loneliness. Folks, I ask you, is this where you want your children to go? Is this where you want your wife

or your husband or your mother or your father to go? Or your friends or your neighbors? Are we going to be so callous that somehow all we want to do is just kind of veg out in front of our televisions and go to work so that we can make enough money to improve our lifestyles, or are we going to get serious about a lost and dying world that's going to hell?

The Word of God also tells us in Revelation 14:10-11 that it's a place where people will be "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day and night." I can't tell you the number of times that I awake in the middle of the night and I pray for loved ones who I fear are going to hell. And in Mark 9:48 the Lord says that it's "a place where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." That's a quote from Isaiah 66:24. A place where the worm will never die. Old scholars and theologians have believed for years that this is a reference to the torment of a fully informed conscience where people will endlessly, throughout eternity, understand how they have offended a holy God. There will no longer be any sense of, "I didn't deserve this." They will know precisely what they deserved. And to wake up in the middle of the night and to see those faces, and hear those voices, it's a haunting thing.

In Daniel 12:2 it's described as a place where people "will awake to disgrace and everlasting contempt." Can you imagine that? You've played the church game all your life, you've said, "Oh yes, I'm a Christian." And then you awake and you find yourself in hell. And you awake to a place of disgrace and everlasting contempt. The word contempt in Hebrew is a word that refers to something that is absolutely loathsome, something that is utterly despicable, something that is wretched. The idea here is that the people who are in hell, in their isolation, in their agony and in their torment, will see themselves as that wretched. In Revelation 14:11 it says, "they have no rest day and night." The great Puritan John Flavel said, "the conscience becomes the whip that must lash the sinners soul in hell, the seat and center of all torments."

And why does God send people to hell? Back to the parable in Luke 16. It's very simple. You remember that the rich man wanted someone to go warn his five brothers, "lest they also come to this place of torment." And the answer was, "No, they have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them, but he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' but he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, (in other words the Old Testament) neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

Beloved, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That's our only hope. Sinners go to hell because they refuse to hear the Word of God. They refuse to hear it. Sinners must be told what's in the Word of God. They must be told about the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. They must understand that all that man is and all that man does is fundamentally offensive to God and that man is absolutely incapable of saving himself, that his only hope is crying out for mercy to a holy God that has provided a way for his salvation, a way to be forgiven and be reconciled to that holy God, and that is through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no other way. That's it. Then to call people to believe in Him. And when you believe in Him, and not just some phony belief, not just some cultural Christianity, but when you truly lay your life before Him, and you say, "Lord, I recognize my sinfulness, I cry out for salvation, I pray that by your grace you will transform me and I will give you my life," when you really do that, the Lord will transform you. He will lavish His love upon you. He will change your life and He will save you.

The Great Commission      Matthew 28:16-20

This is the glorious gospel of Christ. This is the message we are called to preach to all nations, that God might be glorified in the manifestation of His infinite love and His forgiveness. I'm compelled not only by the great commission, but by the reality of hell to preach the gospel. As old brother Spurgeon said, "If sinners be dammed, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for." May this be the passion of our hearts.

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