

Biblical Evangelism

Lesson 1 – The Great Commission

What did the Lord Jesus say brings Him more pleasure than a group of believers gathered together?

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7)

Mark 16:15 - *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”*

Why Christ came

The book of Mark was written to declare the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything that took place during the earthly ministry of the Lord was to prove that He was the sinless Son of God. Jesus did not come to earth so that people could believe in His life or so people could follow His example and be good but so that when He went to the cross to die, there would be no doubt as to who was dying. Had a sinner died on that cross, we would still be lost. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world and proved by signs, wonders, and miracles, as well as by His perfect obedience to the will of His Father, that He was the Son of God. Thus when He accomplished His death and rose from the dead, men could be certain that His had been a sacrificial offering of the Son of God to pay for our sins.

The Resurrection

The same one who said, *“I lay down my life”*, said, *“and I have power to take it up again”* (John 10:17-18). The same one who foretold His crucifixion also promised that three days and three nights later, He would rise from the dead. As the Eternal One, it was impossible that death should hold Him (Acts 2:24).

Who is called unto the Great Commission?

In light of the grand truth of Christ's resurrection, we consider Mark 16:15: “And he said **UNTO THEM**, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Please understand that God is not looking for perfect men, perfect women, expertly trained, marvellously qualified individuals to obey and carry out His Great Commission.

Previously on our chapter, in Mark 16:8 we read *“for they were afraid”*. Verse 10 says, *“as they mourned and wept.”* Verse 11 reads *“And they....believed not.”* The end of verse 13 says, *“neither believed they them.”* Verse 14 states, *“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not...”*

The people addressed in Mark 16:15 are characterised by unbelief, weeping, mourning, fear, and trembling. In verse 15 the word of God tells us, *“And he said unto **THEM**.”*

- God does not care if you are afraid.
- God does not care if your faith is not strong enough.
- God does not care if you do not think you can do the job.
- God does not even care if you are not willing to do it.

HE IS NOT LOOKING FOR PERFECTLY ABLE MEN AND WOMEN. HE IS LOOKING FOR YOU AND ME. HE IS LOOKING FOR TO TAKE WHAT WE ARE AND WHO WE ARE AND SURRENDER OUR OURSELVES TO HIS CONTROL.

Despite ourselves, we are to present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1). God wants us to take our fears, our doubts, our uncertainties, and our frailties and obey the Lord Jesus Christ and go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Qualities needed for Evangelism

We have the mistaken notion that only certain people, who have some miraculous calling are qualified to do the work of an evangelist or missionary. Instead of waiting for an emotional experience sent from above to announce that God has called you to spread the gospel, why not take Him at His word and accept His command to preach the good news?

“But I do not feel I have been called!” – You do not have to be called; you have already been sent. You have already been commissioned. There is no need for supernatural visitations and spine-tingling experiences, or supposed signs to get moving. If God has commanded to go and to preach, it should take something miraculous to prevent us from carrying out His instructions.

“The calling”

People speak as though they were some sort of spiritual superman or some class of elevated saint, saying “God called me to preach”. In Mark 16:15 He called every believer to preach. Another boasts “Well, the Lord put me in the ministry.” In Mark 16:15 He directed every believer into the great work of evangelism. The Holy Spirit was given to empower the believer to preach the gospel to the lost (Acts 1:8), and **EVERY** saved man and woman has been given the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9)

“But I am afraid” – The first men commissioned were afraid.

“I would go out and stand up for Jesus but there is a lot of the Bible I just do not know yet.” – There was plenty that those gathered in the upper room did not know and understand; in fact, chances are high that they did not have a bible of their own. They certainly did not have a single verse of the New Testament. **What they did have was an obedient and will heart.**

God is not looking for finished products to preach His gospel. God is not sending the great Redeemer back down from heaven to carry out the gospel work. He is not sending an angelic host to perfectly articulate the salvation message. He is taking common, ordinary men, women, boys, and girls and saying, “Go them I died, was buried, and rose again.”

Who gave the command?

“And HE SAID unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Next we must understand who is giving this command. It was not the suggestion of the disciples, not their friends and family encouraging them to carry the gospel to the lost. It was the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to men and women He had purchased with His own precious blood. He was not suggesting it might be a good idea or asking them to take a vote on the prospect of going forth to proclaim the good news. He was issuing a command. He was telling them in no uncertain terms what He (God) wanted them (vessels of clay) to do. He has not withdrawn this Great Commission nor exempted any from service.

Gospel Action

“...GO ye into the world...” – The commission begins with **Go**. That is action. That is surrender. That is effort. That is willingness on my part to set aside ease, comfort, personal plans, wellbeing and venture out for Jesus.

Christians want to be in comfortable churches, serve when it is convenient, and deal only with those that are nice to them. Jesus said **Go**. People attend churches with padded pews, stop doing a few bad things, and drop a little money in the box. Jesus tells them to **Go**. We find pleasure in the knowledge that we are going to heaven. Jesus wants us to **Go** to those who are not.

Sometimes, when we are in the street proclaiming the good news, people walk by and mumble “keep it in the church.” We cannot as were told by our Saviour to **Go**.

If you speak up on the job, take out a gospel tract in the shops, turn a family discussion to Christ, people are offended. You are invading their space. You are treading on their territory. You are bringing a message they do not want to hear in a place where they do not want to hear it. We are

sorry if you are troubled and wish that you were not disturbed, but Christians have no choice in the matter. Our Saviour said **Go**, and thus, we must go.

The Gospel is outward bound!

We cannot wait for the lost to come to us. We cannot wait for them to knock on our door. We cannot wait for them to visit our church building or call us on the phone. Inaction is not an option. Every soul in the world is condemned already (John 3:18), on their way to the devil's hell, racing through a life that is but a vapour. We cannot wait for them to come our way; we are commanded to **Go**.

"I don't think you should be doing this. It doesn't do any good!" – If a professing Christian says this, we should remind them that the good has already been done and we are not going on their opinion on the matter. Our Saviour gave us a command and we will honour Him. We must go whether people agree with the Great Commission or not.

Jesus' command to **Go** means that you leave the location where all the saved people are, leave the comfort zone of fellowship where everyone agrees with you, and venture out to purposely encounter people who do not know the Lord, who do not believe like you do, and who do not agree with you. Jesus said **Go**.

Who Goes? YE!

The second word of the charge is ye. If you are not familiar with the wonderfully precise English of the Authorised Version, take note. Modern-day English lacks the pronoun usage to give us clarity on many Bible passages. When the personal pronouns are broken down, you can tell the singular from the plural. In the language of the KJV, thee, thy, thou, and thine – all starting with th – are singular pronouns (one person is being addressed), while the pronouns ye, you, your, and yours – all starting with the letter y – are plural (more than one person is being addressed). This key to understanding is not available in the modern bible versions.

Had the Lord said "GO THOU into all the world and preach the gospel" we might wonder to whom He was speaking. But when He said GO YE, that takes in everyone. Jesus meant every believer, every disciple who has been washed in the blood is to take part in the work of personal evangelism.

Where do we go?

"...INTO ALL THE WORLD..." – Now we have the action, participants and place. While a church invitation has its place, the Great Commission is not to invite the lost to come to a place set apart for the saved. Where this is done, the church services become evangelistic campaigns, and the saved are not taught the word of God. We are not opposed to special meetings to focus in on the gospel but this is not the bible way, nor reason for church meetings. The Lord did not say "Bring the world in". He said "Go out there and win them."

Some would suggest that it is too much to be amongst vile sinners in order to publish abroad the word of life. But the same God who said **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world....For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."** (1 John 2:15-16), instructed all His followers to go into all the world with the words of salvation.

- Jesus wants the gospel preached to those dressed inappropriately .
- Jesus wants the gospel preached to those who drink and are on drugs
- Jesus wants the gospel preached to the adulteress and the thief
- Jesus wants the gospel preached to foul mouthed, the vile rich man, the idolater, the imam, priest etc...

You do not need to love the things/systems of this world in order to venture into the world and preach the gospel. If you love like the Lord you will get amongst the those trapped by their sin as He did, and desire their redemption.

Fake holiness will keep you home. True holiness will protect you as you obediently go out in love.

We must Preach!

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, AND PREACH the gospel to every creature.”

The Lord does not just instruct us to go, but to **PREACH**. It does the lost no good to have saved neighbours or coworkers if the saints among them are silent. The 120 believers did not run from the upper room to sit and have coffee but to preach to the people gathered around them. Philip did not join himself to the Ethiopian to catch a ride on the chariot, but to open his mouth and preach. Peter did not go to Cornelius' house to be impressed by the adorning in the home but to reveal the truth that could save his soul from hell. Paul did not go from town to town to take note of the architectural wonders before him, but to preach to the heathen as to the need for their eternal souls.

You may have heard a deluded modern minister say something along the lines of *“Preach the gospel and if necessary use words”*. By all means live right, but you must TELL THEM what the gospel is. You may have heard a believer that believes living right draws people in. That is all well and good, but you must tell those attracted by the different living why you live that way. Be good to your neighbour, but know that there are no replacements for the Great Commission.

Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:24) but was also a preacher of righteousness (Jude 14). Noah was righteous in all his generations (Genesis 6:9), but he preached (2 Peter 2:5). Moses not only showed Pharaoh who he trusted (Hebrews 11:24-29), he also preached to him. Go right down the line of exemplary bible characters – Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah all walked before the Lord; but they also opened their mouths and proclaimed His word.

“My life is my witness” is a carnal cop-out adopted by people who will not surrender their fear and pride to the Lord. Better would it be to go to the Lord in prayer and say *“Lord, I’m scared. I’m timid. I am a people pleaser. I don’t have enough faith. I repent of my disobedience and lack of love for lost souls. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and give me boldness to witness for my Saviour.”*

Stick to the Gospel!

“...preach THE GOSPEL to every creature.” – We are not to preach religion, politics, good manners, right way to dress but the gospel of Christ.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Once men and women at Corinth were saved and added to the church, they got teaching practical righteousness, instruction and doctrine. But while they were lost, the apostle said, ***“I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”*** (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Brethren, do not get sidetracked. Whatever the conversation, guide it back to their great need and **PREACH THE GOSPEL**.

Saved people get sidetracked so easily these days. They will devote hours each week to some lesser cause (homelessness, political unrest, religious corruption etc...) which may have some merit but does not bring upon them the reproach of the world or the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians seem intent on making the world a better place to live. You will not find that taught or practiced in the book of Acts, or any of the epistles. The world will not be improved sufficiently until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth. Our commission is to help sinners find the Saviour.

“But I need more knowledge” - Many saved people excuse themselves from obeying the Lord's command because they feel they do not know enough about the bible to be an effective witness. Such an excuse is invalid. The Lord did not tell you to go and answer every question, go win every debate, or go silence every objection. He commanded you to give sinners the simple plan of salvation. If you are saved, you can do that.

Paul's example – We have three of Paul's sermons recorded in the book of Acts. In each case he simply tells how Jesus found him, humbled him, and saved him. If you go forth to preach the gospel, not to exposit the scriptures to unsaved people who cannot understand them anyway, you will be doing the Master's bidding.

Speak to them!

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel TO every creature.” – We do not speak to the air, we speak **to**. The message is personal to the hearer. Our words are directed toward those men and women within the sound of our voice. The message is direct.

“Sir, Jesus died for your sins.”

“Madame, Jesus bore your iniquity.”

“Young man, Jesus went to that cross to pay the penalty for your sin.”

We look the man, the woman, the boy, the girl, or multitude in the eye, and we tell them that Jesus went to that cross and paid their penalty so that they could be saved and be washed in the blood and receive eternal life. The gospel is a personal thing. It is needed by every individual. We are sent with instructions to direct the message **to**.

We are not to present the truth in vague or general terms. It is understood that when we focus on an individual or when we make pointed remarks to a group, we run the risk of provoking them to anger. That is the cost. It has been counted. It must be paid.

A tract left in a strategic location is great. Messages on t-shirts and car bumpers are excellent tools. But none are the fulfilment of the Saviour's directive. To every creature is to be proclaimed.

All the world knew the gospel but they do not now!

In the second chapter of Acts we learn that 3000 souls came to know Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. If these 3000 people had won one person to Jesus Christ in the next year, there would have been 6000 believers. If you check the statistics given in Acts 1-5, it seems such was the case.

But in Acts 6 the believers started infighting about who was getting the most attention at the fellowship dinner. After that debacle we read nothing more of large group conversions. But we know of a certainty that the word of God continued to be proclaimed and that from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the earth, those faithful to their Saviour carried out His commission and made His salvation known in the regions beyond.

If these 6000 saints, one year after Christ's ascension, had won one person to Jesus Christ in the next year, after two years there would have been 12000 saved people in the world. Had each of them won but one soul to Christ in the following year, there would have been 24000 saved souls. If every saved person from Acts 2 forward had won one soul to Jesus Christ in a year, every year, and each of their converts had won one person to Jesus Christ in twelve months, every twelve months, the entire population of the earth (at that time) would have been converted to Christianity in 29 years!

That is less than 3 decades to win everyone on earth to Jesus Christ, That means there are a lot of born-again people who have never led a single person to Christ. The reason is simple: **They have not tried.** If anyone were to preach the good news to every creature they encountered – prayerfully, faithfully, with the help of the Holy Ghost – it is certain that in a year, they would find someone somewhere who would receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

We do not need a new technique. We do not need to try a new plan. We do not need a businessman or a public relations firm to invent a new programme. We need faith, and we need obedience.

Will you go?

Will you go next door?

Will you tell someone about the Lord Jesus Christ?

