



Matthew 28:18-20

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ

"Expect great things from God; attempt great thing for God," declared the father of the modern missionary movement, William Carey.

John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified and I will shake the world."

Why did Carey and Wesley have such a passion for missions?

At eight of His post resurrection appearances Jesus told His disciples to go and tell other people that He had risen from the dead. On five of these occasions He commissioned His disciples to go even to "the remotest part of the earth" preaching the good news of His death and resurrection and making disciples. There is no greater reason for world missions. Jesus said, "Go and tell." Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8

We must never make an apology for being in dead earnest about world missions. We must not retreat until Jesus Christ tells us He made a mistake in coming into the world to redeem men.

Jesus has Absolute Authority to Commission His Disciples

Jesus said to His disciples in Galilee "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:18-19). He has that authority because He has risen from the dead. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high in heaven (Heb. 1:1-3). All Scriptures are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* 1995 Update unless otherwise noted.

The Greek word *exousia* translated "authority" here denotes "authority, absolute authority." Jesus has absolute authority, the fullest possible authority in heaven and earth. Jesus Christ has supreme authority throughout the universe, and therefore can commission His disciples and empower them to accomplish God's eternal purpose. Jesus has that authority because of who He is. Jesus "spoke as one already in heaven with a world-wide outlook and with the resources of heaven at His command. His authority or power in His earthly life had been great (Matt. 7:29; 11:27; 21:23f). Now it is boundless and includes earth and heaven" (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Matthew, Vol. 1, p. 244).

In the Gospel of John Jesus said to His disciples, "Peace be to you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21).

Not only do we have the authority, but also the power to be His witness to all the earth (Acts 1:8; Eph. 1:18-23).

He has supreme authority over every power that can be imagined on the earth, above the earth and even demonic power (Phil. 2:8-11). Indeed, every knee will bow and surrender to His authority. Jesus has authority over the material world, angels, archangels, devils, wicked men, spiritual powers, principalities, dominions, thrones, the saints in glory, the church, and His own people on earth.

Jesus Commands us to Go to all the Nations

In Mark 16:15 Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

We are to be His witnesses "to all the nations" (Luke 24:47), even "to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:80).

In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ..." The very way Matthew quotes Jesus is imperative force. Jesus commanded with full strength His disciples to "go" as well make disciples. Literally Jesus says, "Going therefore make disciples all the nations."

Whenever the Gospel is taken from the realm of self-edification and shared with someone else you have missions. The emphasis of the great commission is as you go into all the world make disciples.

Since we are to go unto all the nations and preach the good news, how shall they hear unless one be sent? "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!'" (Romans 10:14-15)

Jesus Gave Instruction for Making Disciples

A missionary is one whose heart is broken by the things that break the heart of God. He has a passion for God and the things of God.

An unknown missionary statesman said, "A missionary is God's man, in God's place, doing God's work, in God's way, for God's glory."

Our task is not to save the world. Missionaries cannot save the world; only Jesus Christ saves. Our task is to evangelize the world. We are to share Christ with a lost world. Missionaries are men and women who have been called, commissioned and sent out to give witness to the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Preach the Good News of Jesus Christ

The heart of the missionary message we herald is the good news in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul summarizes it beautifully for us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

In His own words Jesus told the two on the way to Emmaus, "'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:25-27).

Later Jesus spoke to all the assembled disciples. "'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things'" (Luke 24:44-48).

The reason for our preaching Christ to a lost world is to secure repentance and remission of sins. This is the way God has chosen to save lost sinners. The field for preaching the saving Gospel is the whole world. The equipment is the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling the missionary.

A lost world stands guilty before a holy God. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18).

We are to Make Disciples

Jesus commanded us to make disciples. The Greek word *matheteuo* literally means "to make one a disciple." A disciple is a "pupil," "learner" and denotes "one who follows." A disciple is not simply one who has completed the course, but one who continues to learn as a lifetime commitment. "Make disciples" is imperative. It is a command, an order. He puts into practice what he learns. A disciple of Jesus Christ is one who has a wholehearted commitment to Jesus. Christ is His passion. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is better," was the passion of the apostle Paul.

The educator Earl Pullias said, "You can be no greater a teacher than you are or becoming, as a person. If you would effectively fulfill your role as a teacher, you must constantly grow in greatness as a person." That is discipleship.

Are you growing in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? You cannot be a greater preacher, teacher, pastor, Christian servant than you are or becoming in your personal discipleship. You must be constantly growing in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Here is the secret in the words of Jesus. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Discipleship demands obedience on the part of the believer. Discipleship demands evangelism. If we are followers of Jesus Christ we will be involved in evangelism and discipleship. We have no excuse. A disobedient church is a dying church. As a fire exists by burning, a church exists by evangelism and missions. Churches are dying all over the place because they are disobedient to the Savior's command. Evangelism is the primary task of the missionary because you cannot have disciples without evangelism. You cannot separate the two. We take great pride in number of decisions at evangelism rallies, medical-dental teams, etc., however discipleship must take place if we are fulfilling our commission.

Baptize new Believers in the Name of the Trinity

We baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The word "name" always signifies the sum total of all that the name implies. It is His divine being, all His attributes, characteristics, His revealed nature, attitudes, mind, etc. Everything that is revealed in the Scriptures about God's personal being is revealed in the "name." It is the "name that is above every name." When we speak the name of Jesus or bow in prayer in His name we understand that the name includes all that is revealed of Him and His being.

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

We baptize in the "name" of the Godhead – the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Note the singular, "name," meaning one God—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It does not refer to three gods. Jesus commanded us to baptize believing sinners "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). There is no way we can change that and make it mean something else. When God spoke He did not stutter. He said precisely what He meant and He meant what He said. If God did not mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant? When the plain sense of the Scriptures make common sense, seek no other interpretation. Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context indicate otherwise. Jesus simply said, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

The Trinity is involved in our salvation. God the Father elected or chose you before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6). The Son of God redeemed you by going to the cross and dying on your behalf and paying your debt to the righteousness of a holy God (Eph. 1:7-12). The Holy Spirit regenerated you and caused you to believe on Jesus Christ as your personal Savior when you heard the saving Gospel of God (Eph. 1:13-14). The word "trinity" is not used in the Bible, but the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught throughout the Bible in many passages of Scripture (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; Heb. 6:4-6; 1 John 3:23-24; 4:2; and many more). We baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit because Jesus commanded us to do so.

Teach all His commandments

Evangelism is our primary task, but our responsibility has not ended until we lead that person to making a public commitment of his life to Jesus Christ in baptism, and spiritual growth. Baptism is a public declaration before the watching world that this individual has believed in his heart that Jesus died for his sins and rose from the dead. It is an outward profession of what has already taken place in his heart. He is declaring to everyone observing that he has identified himself with Jesus Christ as his Savior. Baptism is an act of obedience on the part of the believer. Water baptism does not save. It has no saving merits. Only Jesus Christ saves. We are justified by God's grace alone, through faith alone because of the redeeming, atoning death of Jesus Christ alone. Baptism does not wash away our sins; God the Son washes away the believer's sins by His own precious blood. Baptism in water does not add one cent to God's saving grace. It is not essential for salvation. Baptism as such does not bring a person into a

vital union with God. It is an outward, public declaration of faith in Christ who saves. Baptism is an ordinance of the church. We do it in obedience to the command of Jesus. It has no saving merits.

If a person has been born again or spiritually regenerated he or she will want to identify himself with other true believers in Christ. Joining a church is not essential to being saved. It is vital for spiritual growth, however. We need the encouragement, the spiritual stimulation, the fellowship, the admonition of solid Bible study, and worship that comes from being involved in a Bible believing church.

The Christian is involved in a lifetime of learning. I have been a Christian for 60 years, and a preacher for 51 years. I am still a student of God's Word. I approach every passage of Scripture as if I am studying it for the very time in my life. We live in a day of spiritual ignorance, and intellectual laziness in evangelical churches. There is no excuse for not teaching solid Biblical truth in churches. Let's quit pandering to emotions, and teach with clarity the Word of God.

We must be faithful to the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. We have excellent formal, scholarly, accurate translations of God's Word in the language of the people. We have no excuse for not knowing "all His commandments."

New believers need to have a clear understanding of the security of the believer in Christ (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-39; Phil. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 John 5:11-13, etc.). They need to be taught that from the moment they truly believed on Christ they are saved for all eternity. Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

"I am with you always"

How do you accomplish such an impossible task? The apostle Paul said, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 2:17). The ministry of grace is never easy. It is not a bed of roses. What is our motive of service? We have been commissioned by the Master. He has chosen to do His work in and through us for His glory. It is not I, but Christ. The apostle Paul declared it beautifully when he wrote, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

Here is one of the greatest facts in for the believer to rest His faith upon. Jesus says, "Lo" (*idou*) is emphatic "Look" or "remember" or "pay close attention."

Jesus said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). The pronoun "I" is also very emphatic. "No one less than I myself am with you" (William Hendriksen). Literally it reads, "all the days, even to the consummation of the age." I am with you, literally "all the days" or to the "consummation" at the second coming of Christ. What a promise to the believer. Jesus promises to be with us when we go in His name to talk about Him. We are not serving Christ as best we can, but with the sense that we have a constant companion who goes with us throughout life. "I am with you." He will be with us until we draw our last breath. His presence will never be withdrawn. He is with us all the days of our lives until He comes in glory at the Second Coming. A good example is in the testimony of the life of Paul in Acts 26:16-18; 2 Cor. 11:22-33.

Note the emphatic "I" of the one who pledges His presence with us. The One who says, "All authority has been given to Me" is the One who sends His people with the understanding that He is always with us anywhere He sends us. "He does not say 'I will be with you,' but 'I am with you,' and His I is emphatic, 'no less than I'" (Leon Morris, *Matthew*, p. 749).

There is security in these words of Jesus. Put your own name in this great Biblical truth. "I am with _____ always, even to the end of the age."

"You never test the resources of God until you attempt the impossible," said F. B. Meyer. When I try, I fail. When I trust, He succeeds. No matter what kind of day I am having—excellent, bad, troubles, trials, pressures of life and ministry—He comes and says, "My grace is sufficient for you. I will never leave you or forsake you." "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in [your] weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The man or woman who knows what God has sent him into the world to do, will neither depreciate his own work nor envy another. In recent days I have stood and preached God's Word with the conviction that I stand here believing with all my heart that God has spent the past 50 years preparing me for such an hour as this.

What would you do for Christ if you knew you could not fail? We cannot fail if we are at the center of God's will. There is nothing we cannot do if He is doing His work through us His way.

I would rather to have dreamed big and failed than to sit and do nothing.

We do not go in our own strength. When God calls His servants He equips them and provides all that they need to accomplish His eternal purpose. "God's work, done in God's way, will receive God's supply," said Hudson Taylor. Or as the apostle Paul stated it, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. . . . My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Over 53 years ago I made a commitment to God that I am willing to go anywhere, anytime, regardless of the personal costs to lead just one soul to accept Christ as his personal Savior.

One of the Ecuadorian martyrs said it best, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose," Jim Elliot.

Audrey Mieir's song "To Be Used of God" best describes the desire of my heart over the past 53 years of missionary service. It is still the passion of my heart.

"To Be Used of God" by Audrey Mieir

I've a yearning in my heart that cannot be denied,
It's a longing that has never yet been satisfied,
I want the whole world to know the One who loves them so,
Like a flame it's burning deep inside.

Refrain

To be used of God, to speak, to sing, to pray; --
To be used of God to show someone the way.
I long so much to feel the touch of His consuming fire,
To be used of God – is my desire.

When I think about the shortness of my earthly years,
I remember all the wasted days, the wasted tears,
I long to preach the word to those who've never heard,
Of the One who can dispel all fears.

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