

# The Great Commission and Those Commissioned

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*Biblical Evangelism*

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I ask you to open your Bibles to John chapter 20. Let's look at what we have covered so far the last couple of Lord's Days to kind of review and to catch the train of thought as we work through John chapter 20 and verse 21 this morning.

We have seen from Romans chapter eight—and I think from the general tone of Scripture—that God's purpose in history is to glorify himself by glorifying his people. That is, that from the very beginning God created a world which, if you just simply believe in the God-ness of God, which he at least knew would turn out in every detail the way that it has...

Now, I believe the Scriptures teach that God has ordained those details, not necessarily caused them, not necessarily forced the sin upon anyone who sinned to put it that way. he is not the author of sin. But his decision is an ordaining decision. It is an effective decision. There is no way God can decide something and not have it happen.

Nonetheless, at the very least we know that God created a world which he knew would turn out exactly as it has. And Paul, in Romans chapter eight, shows us that he did this in hope. That is, in anticipation of the future glory of all things, the glory of those who are his and the glory of the new heavens and the new earth so that all of the sin and all of the misery that comes with sin including the death and suffering of his own Son and the bearing of the wrath of our sins at the hand of God the Father himself, that all of these things God looks at and says, "It is worth it."

The eternity of the manifestation of his glory in his Son and in that glory which is given to us by the Son—as we read in John 17—God looks at it and says, "It is not just worth. It is so far worth it that the miseries of this world aren't even worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us afterwards."

The short, temporary problems that we all have because we live in a sinful world and are sinners, all of those things as terrible as they may seem at the moment, are nothing compared to the eternal surpassing glory that God has given to us as an inheritance and a future possession.

As we then look at history we must understand that God's purpose in history is not a vain attempt to save every human being. In fact, we can look in places in Scripture, well, for example, where Jesus tells us himself that if the miracles that had been done in Capernaum and around Galilee, if those miracles had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. And yet there is no record of those miracles ever being done in Sodom and Gomorrah.

If the eternal Son of God knows if he had just done these miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah they would have repented and not one, maybe two day's journey at the most away from Sodom and Gomorrah is who? Abraham, the father of faith, a prophet who speaks to God face to face. And God never says to Abraham, "Go down there and we are going to do these miracles so these cities will repent." In fact, he says to him, "Watch. I am going to destroy them in judgment."

God's purpose in history is not a vain attempt to save everyone. And I know that is difficult for us to wrestle with. But it makes my salvation all that much more precious when I think about that.

So when we look at our purpose of evangelism we must be consistent with God's purpose. As I told the story of pastor Mike Brenahan, our target audience is the elect of God, that is, we are to preach and to proclaim the gospel in a manner consistent with God's purpose. We are to do the task of evangelism according to his directions, according to his purposes and his plan, not our own so that when we come to the Great Commission, which we looked at last week in Matthew 28, and, in fact, there are four such commissions in the Scriptures, one at each of the end of the four gospels. Matthew has one and Mark, Luke and John, as we look at these Great Commissions we are to understand their provisions, their criteria in this life, that God is not sending men into the world with the purpose of trying to convince everyone to make a decision for Christ. Rather, he is commissioning apostles to go out and to proclaim truth. And God will then use that truth and the proclamation of it to call out of the world those who are his own.

The Great Commission must be understood in this perspective. Jesus Christ has bound the evil one. He has received all authority, all rightful authority in heaven and in earth. And Jesus Christ is even now calling out his own from all over the world through the means of the truth. The instruments or the agents by which this work was begun were the apostles. The Great Commission of Scripture is properly given to the apostles. And they fulfilled it in the first century.

However, the Great Commission extends as long as disciples are being made, as long as the elect are being saved and as long as Christ is with his people so that the apostles carried out the Great Commission and functioned as the foundation of the Church. It is therefore the Church, in particular the local church or local churches operating together, that carry on this Great Commission today. It is the Church that makes disciples, baptizes and teaches them all things that Christ has commanded. The primary means of carrying out the Great Commission is by a church or churches appointing men to preach

the gospel, that is both from the pulpits and outside the church as well. And we will talk about that a little bit more in detail.

Our primary emphasis, then, is on the local church. We are to ask ourselves how we may best help the Church carry out the Great Commission. We are not to ask ourselves, “How do I fulfill the Great Commission?” but rather, “How do we fulfill the Great Commission?”

How do I assist in this task? What can I do as a member of the body of Christ gathered in this place covenanting together with other believers? What can we do to bring about the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Primarily this involves, at the very least, our prayers, our faithful attendance to the church services on the Lord’s Day, our tithes and our offerings, living holy lives which adorn the doctrine of our profession, our support of the Church in this manner.

Now, after last Sunday I received a lot of questions both in person and by email and none by snail mail, interesting enough, the technology of our day. And by far the most commonly asked question that I received over this last week was this. What does that mean for me as an individual then? Does that mean I am not supposed to spread the gospel on my own?

The answer to that, by the way, is: No, it does not mean that. By no means does it mean that. But it is interesting to me that our religious culture has so ingrained us to think of evangelism as an individual thing that when the right doctrine of evangelism as a Church project, if you will, when that is preached immediately we run back to, “Well, what about me? What do I do as an individual?”

It is not wrong to think of yourself as bearing the gospel or being a witness of Jesus Christ. And as we go through this lesson or this series of lessons we will talk more about what that means. But it is important for us to focus first and foremost on being a part of the body of Christ. In fact, when you read 1 Corinthians, the whole tone of what Paul is about is telling the Corinthians to stop operating as individuals and to start thinking of themselves as members of a body. Stop standing up and saying, “Look how wise I am,” or, “Look how many gifts I have. I speak in tongues. You know, I perform miracles. I have great wisdom. I do... I am a follower of Paul. I am one of Paul’s little clique, you know, oh, I follow Peter. He is much more animated.”

Well, you know, I this and I that.

And Paul says, “Stop and think for a moment. You are members of the body of Christ. Act that way.”

And we need to retrain our thinking away from Americanistic individualism towards a concept of being members of the body of Christ.

More important than your personal witness for Jesus is our corporate witness for Jesus Christ. The reputation of the gospel is tied to the reputation of the Church. And as the reputation of the Church in America has greatly declined for a variety of reasons, so has the respect for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May I also add this? And this is somewhat of an aside, but it is a very important application. We must also rid ourselves of this idea that every individual member of the church must be involved daily with some kind of personal evangelism.

Now, since I have already rubbed against the grain the last two Sundays, I might as well keep it going today.

Someone asked me, “You mean there are some people in the church that you don’t want witnessing?”

Yes.

If you are not faithful in your Sunday attendance, if you do not pray regularly for the preachers and the preaching of the Word, if you do not pray regularly for missionaries and if you do not pray regularly for one another, if you do not pursue holiness in your daily life, if you are not tithing your income, if you are not leading your family in devotions of the Word of God in some way, husbands, fathers, then your concern of personal evangelism is not your primary goal at that time in your life. Your primary goal is to pursue these things in support of the local church. And as you pursue holiness, so prepare yourself to be a good witness of Jesus Christ.

My analogy is something like this, that there is a concerned citizen who want to seek political office to cure America of its evils, to right wrongs and restore justice and the rule of law and order. But this person seeking political office has never voted, has never even registered to vote, has never given money to a political cause, has never prayed about the moral situation of America and has never donated their time. But I want to run for office.

You are not ready.

Evangelism is a function of sanctification. If you go to the office, men or ladies, and you are known as somebody who puts your nose in everybody else’s business or somebody who gets angry, throws fits, somebody whose blood pressure boils over regularly, if you are known as somebody who, gentlemen, who just flirts a little too much with the ladies at work or, ladies, same with the gentlemen at work, you have greater issues about bearing witness to Christ through your holy life than you need to be concerned about in terms of passing out tracts or speaking about Jesus with your mouth.

There are basics that are involved.

We dare not take what belongs to the Church and make it belong to me... I make it belong to me as an individual. I do not look at the Great Commission and say that Christ is commissioning me as an individual. He is commissioning the apostles and then that which builds on the foundation of the apostles which is the Church.

In short, what I have seen is that whenever the Great Commission is taken and preached as if it were something, as an obligation to use an individual, the preacher usually ignores the fact that Christ is speaking to apostles or he makes the individual Christian as if they are in the role of the apostles or they truncate the Great Commission to “Go,” and leave out the, oh, the baptize and the disciple. And the commission is not fulfilled unless all of those things are done.

The cure for this, then, is to understand the Great Commission. And we understand it in the context of God’s purpose for the ages, to glorify himself. And so there is a chain that is involved.

And here is the next step that we want to take this morning, that God’s purpose from all eternity involves the sending of his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, then, commissions his apostles to carry on the work which he was sent to do. The Church, building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets carries out that commission primarily by commissioning gifted men from within the Church for the preaching of the gospel so that all along the line you have this idea of being sent or being commissioned carried out in the Word of God.

The Father sends the Son. The Son sends the apostles. The Church, building on the foundation and as heir of the apostles, sends gifted men. There is a commissioning of the Father, a commissioning by the Son, a commissioning by the Church, the body of Christ in his place and those who are commissioned carry out the preaching of the Word of God.

Again, that is not an exclusive realm. It is not that those commissioned by the Church are the only ones who can ever say anything about Jesus. That is not what we mean and that is not what Scripture teaches. It does mean that ordinarily that is the pattern by which truth is proclaimed and souls are brought to Christ.

I would like to do something. I am just going to ask a question, ok? And you are going to raise your hand. How many of you came to Christ through the ministry of a local church either by being raised in church and hearing the gospel preached or attending church and hearing the gospel preached? Somewhere along the line it was through the preaching or teaching ministry of the local church that you came to understand the gospel and came to faith in Christ through that means. Raise your hand.

Now, look around you. Go ahead. Keep your hands up, but look around you. Ok.

Now those of you that don’t fit that bill, I am not going to embarrass you at all. But I do want you to raise your hand. If you don’t fit that criterion raise your hand? Probably about what? Ten percent? You are the extraordinary ones. You are. And I was looking

at those who raised their hands and knowing the testimony that I have heard from you as you have come to join the church or just getting to know you, I know some of your testimonies are very extraordinary. God did something unusual in bringing you to faith in Christ. Some of you were raised in church and the last thing you heard there was the gospel. And some of you were just heathen. That is a light hearted comment.

But those of you who I say, you know, were just heathen—and you know who I am talking to—you know, I looked out and you were going, “Oh, yeah, brother. I...”

And God did something marvelous. But you know what? Ordinarily it is the preaching o the pulpit or the ministry of the church, the teaching ministry of the church through men appointed by the church that carries the gospel and which people are saved and brought to Christ. That is not unusual. It has been that way for 2000 years.

So let’s look at this chain of commissioning then. Let’s go to John chapter 20. This is after the resurrection of Christ. This is verse 19.

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."<sup>1</sup>

This is Christ in his resurrected, glorified state coming and just appearing. The doors are shut and locked. The disciples are gathered together, but they are doing so in fear of the Jews and Jesus just comes and just appears in their midst.

“Peace,” he says to them. “Peace to you.”

He proves it is him through the wounds of his hands and his side. And then he says, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”<sup>2</sup>

Here is our issue then for this morning. What does it mean to us that Jesus commissions the apostles as he himself was commissioned by the Father?

When Jesus says, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you,”<sup>3</sup> that as he was commissioned and sent by the Father, so now he commissions and sends the apostles. What does that mean and what does it mean to us since we are not apostles?

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:19-23.

<sup>2</sup> John 20:21.

Well, let me give you some ideas and then some applications as to how to use this.

First, first and foremost it means that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father. You must start there.

We speak so much of Jesus Christ coming to earth to save us, to die on the cross that if we are not careful we will lose the balance of what it means that Jesus was sent by the Father. It does not mean the Father ordered him to go when he did not want to go. Christ's death on the cross is not—as some have alleged—some sort of cosmic child abuse. It is a voluntary, covenantal agreement between Father and Son from all eternity and the Holy Spirit as well. It is a triune—or, if you will, trinitarian—salvation.

But it does mean that when Jesus Christ comes into the world he comes with the authority and the commissioning of the Father. He does not come as an independent agent. He does not just stand up and say, “You know, I have got an idea. I think I will go become a human being and die on a cross to save some people.”

The Father and the Spirit go, “Well, ok, if you want to.”

It is not an individualistic thing. It is done in concert and by commission and by the authority of the Father. In fact, the very term “Christ” which is the Greek word or “Messiah” Hebrew, is the idea of being anointed to a purpose, to a call. That as a king was anointed to be a king so that he stood there and could say that he was king by the authority of God, as a prophet was anointed to be a prophet so that he could stand and say, “I carry out the role of a prophet by the authority of God, so Jesus Christ comes and says, “I am the anointed and I carry out my mission by the authority of the Father.”

He does not act alone.

So crucial is this to our understanding of salvation that Christ says you must believe in him who sent him in order to understand salvation.

Let me put it to you this way. If you ask the average American on the street, “Do you believe in Jesus?” A lot of them are going to say, “Yes.”

But the Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Jesus and the Mormons believe in Jesus and you get the idea.

What do you believe about Jesus is crucial to salvation. And one of the elements that is necessary to be understood is this concept of being sent.

Turn, if you will, to John chapter five.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

I don't know that there is going to be preaching in heaven. If there is, I don't know that I am going to ever get to do any of it. You know, because if I have to stand in line behind Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest, forget it.

But if there is and if I get that chance, may God grant me 10,000 years in John chapter five. Look in John chapter five and verse 24.

After declaring his equality with the Father in all ways in verse 24 Jesus says this. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes..."<sup>4</sup>

And I stop because our normal anticipation is... believes in me. But that is not what he says.

"...who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life."<sup>5</sup>

Do you trust that the Father who sent the Son did so for the purpose of paying for sins? Do you trust that the Father who commissioned the Son, commissioned him to come and die as an atonement?

This is not an accident. This is not something that happens when he is trying to accomplish something else. He came to die, to give his life as a ransom for many. And This is not a decision that he makes. It is a commission that he receives from the Father.

You hear his Word and you believe in him who sent Jesus Christ.

Turn if you will to John chapter 17. And I believe I could multiply such instances from the book of John, but these, I think, will suffice. John chapter 17 and verse three.

"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."<sup>6</sup>

The concept of the Father sending or of the Son being sent—same thing, just different perspectives—was part of eternal life. It is part of the understanding of the gospel of salvation so that Christ, especially in the book of John, teaches over and over again that faith is faith not just in a person, but faith in the divinely appointed plan of sending a Savior, that it is a perfect plan, perfectly fulfilled. And our Redeemer was sent for our salvation.

That helps you understand the work on the cross. That helps you understand salvation so that when we come to John chapter 20 and he says in verse 21, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you,"<sup>7</sup> that we understand, first and foremost, what it means that Jesus Christ was sent. He was commissioned under the authority of God the Father to

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<sup>4</sup> John 5:24.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> John 17:3.

<sup>7</sup> John 20:21.



accomplish a particular purpose so that Jesus now then—and here is the second point—turns to his disciples and says, “I have been commissioned. Now I commission you.”

What he is getting across to us is this necessity of being sent by the Father or the necessity of being sent and commissioned by some authority. You don’t just simply take upon yourself the role of saying, I am sent from God.

You don’t just stand up and say, “I speak for God.”

One of my biggest gripes about street preaching...

And, by the way, I prefer street preaching... If we are going to do mass evangelism of some kind, I prefer that method to the door to door salesman job. I really do, because it is preaching. I just think it ought to be done by those commissioned by the Church to do it. So that you don’t have Joe Maverick out there standing up on his homemade soap box, you know, just firing it away.

“Well, why are you out here preaching?”

“Well, God called me to do it.”

“How do you know God called you to do it?”

“Because I feel like it.”

Imagine in the Old Testament a prophet or someone standing up and saying, “I am a prophet of God.”

“Did God appoint you?”

“Oh, I kind of appointed myself.”

What happened to such people in the nation of Israel who did that? They were executed if Israel was doing what it was supposed to do.

You don’t just appoint yourself spokesman for God. And when Jesus Christ comes on earth, he is very careful to say over and over again, “I did not send myself. I do not speak of my own authority. The words that I speak are the words that the Father gave me to speak. He has given me a commandment. He has given to me his name. I have revealed his name to the apostles. I have fulfilled the task that God the Father has given me to do.”

Jesus Christ is careful to point out that he is not self commissioned because it is necessary that we understand that one does not simply take upon himself the role of speaking for God. We do not just stand up and say, “Here I am giving you God’s message. Thus saith the Lord.”

There must be this commissioning involved.

Look again, if you will, in John, this time John chapter seven. Notice how Jesus is careful to get this point across, verse 16.

“Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.’”<sup>8</sup>

Now consider that. This is the eternal Son of God. This is the divine Son of God. And he is very careful to say, “Even though I am God in human flesh, what I am teaching you, my teaching is not my own. It is the doctrine, it is the teaching of the one who sent me.”

Verse 17.

If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.<sup>9</sup>

So Jesus says, “If you really want to do God’s will, then, you will know that what I am telling you comes from him.”

And if someone stands up and appoints themselves an orator, if someone stands up and appoints themselves spokesperson for God, woman or man, they stand up and declare themselves to be God’s prophets, Jesus says they are doing it because they are really seeking their own glory. They want the attention. They want the headlines. They want the status.

Look at me? I am a prophet.

You don’t take the role of being God’s spokesman or spokeswoman upon yourself. There must be a commissioning.

It means that the Church—and this is my third point from John chapter 20—when Jesus says, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you,”<sup>10</sup> it means that Christ is commissioned. It means this commissioning is necessary. It means, then, that the Church that carries on this commissioning of the apostles carries on the ministry or carries on the commissioning through commissioning men to do this job.

We have looked at Ephesians chapter four and verse 12. When Christ goes to heaven and ascends to the right hand of God the Father and all authority is his, how does he carry out his commission as king of the universe? He gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. He gives men to the Church. He commissions them.

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<sup>8</sup> John 7:16.

<sup>9</sup> John 7:18-19.

<sup>10</sup> John 20:21.

The Church, in turn, recognizes these men—in particular the pastors and the teachers of our day and age—and sends them, authorizes them, commissions them to preach the gospel.

Look, if you will, at Romans chapter 10 starting at verse 13.

“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’”<sup>11</sup>

You won’t find a stricter, stauncher, supralapsarian Calvinist than the guy who stands in the pulpit this morning and yet I assure you I believe that verse with all my heart. So just as an aside, if you are here this morning without Jesus Christ call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved. Cry out for mercy and he will hear you. Come to him and he will save you. All who come to him, none of them he will ever cast out. You call upon the name of the Lord with your sins in your hands and the worthless of your works before you and you cling to Christ as your only hope of salvation, you will be saved. God is faithful. I believe that with all my heart.

But Paul in verse 14 goes on through some very practical questions.

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?”<sup>12</sup>

That makes sense. If you don’t believe in Jesus as Savior, you are not going to call upon him to save you. There are some things about him you must know and believe.

“And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”<sup>13</sup>

How can you believe in him if you have never even heard of Jesus Christ? Ok, or, not only never heard of Christ, maybe you have heard of Christ, but you have not heard of his work. You have not heard of what the cross accomplished. There are truths and doctrines that you have never heard taught.

Well, “And how shall they hear without a preacher?”<sup>14</sup>

And every time when I was growing up that this verse was taught, verse 14 stopped right there and the word “preacher” was universalized. Everybody is a preacher. Kind of like what Larry talked about several weeks ago. Everybody is a minister.

So you go out and you preach. Everybody go preach because they can’t hear unless there is a preacher, so all of you go out and be preachers.

What does verse 15 say? There is one more question.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 10:13.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 10:14.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

“And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”<sup>15</sup>

Now I want you to get that because in the apostle Paul’s mind the concept of preaching and being sent are so intertwined that you can’t have one without the other. Just as the concept of believing and hearing are so intertwined that you can’t believe unless you hear, just as the concept of hearing, unless there be a preacher are so intertwined that you can’t hear unless someone preaches, so Paul says they cannot preach unless they are commissioned, unless they are sent. And in Paul’s mind, the last thing in the world that he would have ever expected to see is someone to stand up and proclaim themselves a preacher of the gospel without being commissioned to being a preacher. To him it is a foreign concept. You can’t preach unless you are sent. You can’t stand up and proclaim yourself to speak for God unless God has commissioned you and he has either done that personally like he did with the apostles or he has done it through his body the Church. But one way or another, you don’t preach unless you are sent. So that as the Church builds upon the foundation of the apostle and prophets and carries on this ministry, it does so through commissioned men.

Keep reading in verse 15 because he quotes from Isaiah where we read this morning.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”<sup>16</sup>

Now you say, “What in the world has that got to do with preaching the gospel?”

Well, contrary to what some said this morning, it really has nothing to do with beautiful feet, per se. My feet are not beautiful and I have seen Larry’s. And there is a reason he is nicknamed the hobbit, ok?

To what is Isaiah referring? What is the metaphor? What is the picture that he refers to? Well, in those days you didn’t have telephones, telegraphs, internet, email, snail mail. Messages were carried from one city to another by officially appointed messengers, heralds. In the New Testament the word “herald” in its verb form is what comes out as preach. It is the same word, κηρυσσω (kay-roos’-so), ok, to herald, to proclaim, to preach.

And so Isaiah is referring to the officially appointed herald. It could be after a battle where the people of the city looked up and they see the messenger coming from the armies with the message and the message is either good news, “We won,” or it is bad news, “We lost and you all are about to become slaves.”

But whatever it is, whether it is after a military battle or whatever, the sight of a messenger coming over the hills, the appointed, official representative from the king or from the general and he brings good news. “We won.”

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<sup>15</sup> Romans 10:15.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

How beautiful a sigh, Isaiah says.

Now you are a soldier in the army of King David or Josiah or whoever. You don't just stop in the middle of the battle and go, "Hey, we're winning. I think I will go back and tell the city," and turn around and decide to run as a messenger all a self appointed messenger.

What happened to you in that situation is you got killed. It is called treason. It is called desertion. Even if you made it past the army, when you arrived at the city the city already knew who the appointed messengers were. It was all laid out in advance. There were certain people they looked for so they would know what message to, you know, to believe. And so you showed up and you are not an appointed messenger and you go, "I have news."

Yeah, the news is you just deserted. You are dead. You don't appoint yourself a messenger. It wasn't done. You went and you were appointed and the king or the general or whoever says, "Go, take a message."

And this is Paul's point in Romans chapter 10.

Christ doesn't come on his own. The apostles don't stand up and say, "I am appointing myself an apostle." That is a contradiction of terms. The word "apostle" means sent. Nor do we stand up and say, "I am just going to appoint myself."

How can they preach unless they are sent like the heralds in the old day, the runners who brought messages, officially appointed to that task. That is who proclaims the gospel in Paul's understanding.

Let me give you some applications of how to put this to practice, some ideas of how to use this doctrine in our lives.

First, we should expect to see primarily the task of preaching of the gospel, excuse me, the task of preaching the gospel consistent with God's plan. That is, to save his elect. That this task is carried out through the sending or the commissioning of men to preach the gospel under the authority of the local church.

I mangled that because I was trying to do two things at once. I am going to say it again and I am going to shorten it.

We should expect to see that primarily the task of preaching the gospel is carried out by commissioned men who preach the gospel under the authority of the local church. I stand here this morning because you have commissioned me to do so, not because Larry says I can or Jarett or Eddy, not because the deacons, you know, give me the approval. It is because the authority of Jesus Christ is with his gathered Church. And you bear that

authority as a church and using that authority, you have commissioned me to preach the gospel.

In a sense, I am here this morning by your direction, by your authority.

Now, don't go inflating yourself. But you need to appreciate the authority that Christ has given to us as a church. Where two or three are gathered, there he is in the midst. And if we declare someone to be a member of the church and following Christ's will, then we have the authority of heaven backing us up. And if we excommunicate someone out of the church we have the authority of heaven backing us up. When the Church appoints men as deacons and pastors and teachers, it does so with the authority of Jesus Christ himself. That does not make us infallible. It makes us submissive to the Word of God, but as long as we are submissive to that Word and gather in his name, we operate with his promised authority and blessing.

So that this task of preaching the gospel is done through pastors and missionaries, but I think it is also done through those who do not fill the office of pastor or missionary or deacon, but in whom the church nonetheless recognizes for their gift of teaching.

In Ephesians four he gives some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Now this is must me. I haven't bounced this off the other elders yet and so this is my take on this verse, ok? I don't think that necessarily the term teacher is completely synonymous with pastor. I think, in fact, as you look through Church history the Church has always recognized some men as having the gift of teaching in some particular fashion, but not appoint them to the role of elder in the Church or deacon.

There are some who have been deacons who have also been preachers of the gospel: Stephen and Philip, for example, in the book of Acts. But I think there are others who have been commissioned. In fact, in the ecclesiastical parlance there are two things that happen to a minister. He is ordained and he is licensed.

Do you know what the difference between those two is? What modern day, not a whole lot. But in the old days I man might be licensed but not ordained meaning that under the authority of a local church he was sent out, usually to places that either didn't have a church or just a group of people gathering together and he functioned as an emissary of the other church and so he would, on the Lord's Day maybe go to some small little hamlet, some little town, gather the believers together, preach the gospel, baptize believers, perform marriage ceremonies, perform funerals as necessary and function in many respects like a pastor, but without being ordained as a pastor, operating under the authority of the church that sent him out. He was licensed, but not ordained.

And very often young men who had an interest in the ministry, one of the intervening steps towards ordination was, first, being licensed. So you were licensed to preach and then, later on, as a church called you and ordained you, you were then considered to be ordained.

I think this concept of the teacher from Ephesians four fits that niche, that we might even expect from our own men to see men gifted perhaps especially gifted in evangelism. And we as a church recognize that and place upon them our blessing and then we pray for them and we support them and we help them.

If God were to send us somebody who maybe was particularly gifted in evangelism of some form, it would not be out of the ordinary or it would not be out of biblical guidelines for us as a church to recognize that man and then for us as a church to support him in his evangelism. So rather than trying to create a whole group full of cookie cutter, manufactured memorize this speech, go knock on the door and you have got five minutes to get them saved kind of evangelists, do we understand that we are looking for gifted men upon whom the Spirit of God rests to fulfill this task?

Secondly, if a man or a woman takes this role upon themselves they are arrogating a position which is not theirs. That does not mean that you never speak of Jesus Christ because you don't want to... I am a prophet and that. That is not that at all. In fact, Scriptures command you to live your life in such a way that they give glory to God the Father, that men ask you a reason of the hope that lies within you, that you create opportunities, not so much through some pre memorized speech, but that you create opportunities through holiness of life to tell people about Jesus Christ.

And, oh, by the way, you study so that you do so accurately and carefully.

But if a man or a woman takes upon themselves the role of claiming, "I am a preacher. I am a teacher," and they appoint themselves to that role, then they are like one who rises up and proclaims themselves a prophet when God has not sent them.

And the reason the Church is so disrespected is because our airwaves and media is filled with men and women whom God has not sent.

We don't need more of those kinds of churches. We need less churches in America if it is going to be like that.

Third, you sit there and you say, "I am not one of those gifted guys. I am not a pastor. I am not a teacher. I don't ever see myself as being commissioned or gifted in this area. What can I do for the cause of the Great Commission?"

Well, there are a number of things, but let me leave you with these ideas. First of all, you say, "I am not gifted. I am not sent. I am not commissioned."

Particularly to the young men of this church, seek to be so.

Now the answer may come back, "No, sorry. We don't believe you have this gift."

The church may never recognize it. But if desire is one of the criteria, 1 Timothy three, to desire the office, and if evangelism is a product of sanctification, then I submit to you that you need to be striving for holiness in your life. You need to strive to have superior understanding of the Word of God. Start with the basics, but pursue and cultivate what you do have. Seek to put to work what God has given you. Whatever gifts you do have, use them. And maybe God will give you more.

Start with being faithful every Lord's Day. Come to prayer and pray with the church. Attend faithfully the services. Stay for Sunday school. Study the Word of God with us as a church. Work with your pastors, your elders. Ask us questions. Read. Test what you learn against the Church and against your pastors. Don't be an individual, but cultivate what you have. Give, pray, pursue holiness.

Anyone who says, "I am gifted," and pronounces themselves such, they are arrogating to themselves something which is not theirs. But anyone who says, "Well, I don't know if I am gifted or not. I will just sit around and do nothing and wait and see," will never be gifted and never be recognized.

Strive for holiness.

Last, if the church never recognizes you, never commissions you as pastor or deacon or teacher, never licenses you or puts its authority upon you, never sees an extraordinary or developed gift in you and you say, "I am just your average pew sitter. What do I do?" you stay by the stuff.

That phrase comes from a story in the Old Testament. David and his men have got families near a town called Ziklag. The Amalekites who are just marauding bandits come and they attack the town and they take everything that belongs to David and his men away. They kidnap their wives. They kidnap their children. They steal everything they own and they are gone.

David and his men start pursuing them. And as this goes on, day after day, there are 200 of those men who are just so weary that they cannot go on. They are slowing the rest of them down, in fact. And so David appoints those 200 men to watch the stuff. Here is the supplies that we do have. Here is the people that we do have. You 200 stay here and protect that. The remaining 400, we are going to go.

And they go. They overtake the Amalekites while they are all partying, drunk, wipe them out. Recover everything. Come back and the ones who went said, "Hey, the 200 that didn't go with us, all they get is just the family. They don't get any of the spoil."

And David says, "No," and he makes a statute, a law from that point forward in Israel that the one who stays by the stuff shares in the spoils just like the one who went to battle.

You sit in the pew and you go, "I will never be one of these commissioned gifted people."



Then stay by the stuff. And I assure you that for every soul that hears the gospel through the ministry of Heritage Baptist Church you have an equal share as much as the man who stands up in the street preaches or the man who stands in the pulpit and preaches. For every child raised in this church who hears the gospel and comes to Christ, you have an equal share in the glory of that as the preacher who preached the gospel that day. You stay by the stuff. You pray for your pastors. You have no idea how much that means to me. You be faithful. You give. And your share of the reward is for all eternity, is equal to everybody else's. You stay by the stuff, because if you don't I have nothing to do. This church will disintegrate without your prayers and your support, your attendance, your giving. I will preach to empty pews and then they will come and take the pews. Stay by the stuff and share in the eternal reward of the body of Christ in the preaching of God's Word.