

Mission Possible

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[0:01] Mission possible. You know, it's an awesome responsibility to address you today, this gathering of immortal souls about the things of God, the precious things of God.

And there's a message here that's so vital, so important, so needful. And it means so much to me, to us. It's so important. So let me introduce these thoughts to you to say that people are searching. People are searching today. Searching for answers. Searching for hope. Searching for meaning and purpose to life. Why are we here? And we have a message for them, don't we?

We have a reason for hope. People that are longing for meaning and searching for purpose, I've put to you that we have the answer to them. And for us, it's the only cause worthy of our lives, of being a part of this, God's precious plan to spread the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Meaning and purpose. We're talking about people searching. All around us, there's people searching. They're clueless. They're lost without hope. And meaning and purpose is so essential for us.

[1:10] Nazis, in order to crush a man, would give him work that was totally meaningless. Totally meaningless. We think, for example, of a time where hundreds of Jewish prisoners had survived these disease-infected barracks on little food and gruesome, back-tracking work.

They'd worked in a factory for many long years. And one day the Allied bombers came and bombed the factory, and the next morning hundreds of inmates were herded together in the charred remains of this concentration camp of this factory that had been blown up.

And a Nazi officer commanded them to shovel sand in carts, in wheelbarrows, and dragged them from one end of the plant to the other. And then the next day the process was repeated, but they dragged those wheelbarrows, they loaded them up with sand, and dropped them on the other side in another pile, another huge pile on the other side of the compound.

It was meaningless work. When they first saw this happen, they said a mistake has been made. But no, it was purposeful. Purposeful purposelessness.

Day after day they hauled the sand from one pile to the other, and then from that pile back again. And it started to affect people.

[2:38] They broke down. One man was crying uncontrollably, and the guards called him away. Another screamed until he was beaten into silence. And one guard who survived three years, one who had survived three years, ran.

And the guards ordered him to stop because the electrified fence was there. And prisoners cried out, but then there was a blinding flash and a terrible noise, a smoke puffed from the smouldering flesh.

And in the days that followed, dozens of the prisoners went mad. They ran from their work only to be shot or to be electrified on the fence. And the commandant smugly remarked that there would be sometime there may be no more use for the ovens.

It was so destructive to take away that which was meaningful for them, that which was purposeful for them. And, brothers and sisters, today human beings are designed.

We're born with that compelling need for meaning and for purpose. And we cling to life with this rugged resolve while work is meaningful, even if it supports that which we hate.

[3:51] But meaninglessness and purposelessness destroy the mind and ruin the life. That's what happened here. We all need meaning and purpose, don't we, in life.

Our life's meaning and purpose is found in the Lord Jesus. God has a plan and it included you. A part in this plan is to help others to know the Lord Jesus, to know him, to follow him.

That's why we're here. That's why he's saved us. Our life purpose, our church's purpose is all in this. It's all wrapped up in this. It's all found in this, God's plan.

That's why we run a homework club, not necessarily to teach children how to do homework. It's that we can win them to Christ. That's why we encourage people to get involved with the English language classes.

That's why we have a women's fellowship. That's why we have a youth group. That's why we have a Sunday school. Because we want to encourage people to know and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we get involved in these things.

[4:50] That's why we do these things. It's the master plan, the master's plan. And the Lord Jesus wants his church to produce people who follow and obey him. And here is his plan.

His plan for us. His plan is wrapped up in this statement in Matthew 28, before he ascended. Matthew 28 from verse 18. And Jesus came and spake unto them and said, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teach all nations.

Make disciples. Verse 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Amen. The passage here has been called the Great Commission. Go ye into all the world. The Great Commission. Our purpose is found here.

[5:54] And friends, the Great Commission hasn't expired. Still current. How long? Until the end of the world.

The end of the age. The end of time. As we know. Sadly, it's as if the Great Commission has become the Great Omission. Omission.

In other words, we omit to do it. We neglect it. The Lord Jesus says to the fishermen by the sea, he says, come, follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men.

The call and the mission is still the same for us today. We call to mission. Consider today's mission field. In today's Western world, it's said that 80% of the population rarely darken the footstep, the doorstep of a church.

And the suburban church must be a missionary organisation. We should have that heart for mission, that heart for witness for Christ rather than just being a haven for the holy, some sort of holy huddle, holy club.

[7:01] We must reach beyond these walls. It's been said that missionaries used to live in the tropics. Missionaries now live in the suburbs. And friends, we're all called to mission.

We're all called to this. We all have this mandate, this same commission, this same mission. Go ye. Go ye. Look at some of the statistics.

Now these are American ones, but 70 to 80% of church growth in the US is not growth at all. It's people moving from one church to another. They're just changing what building they go to.

And 95% of Americans believe in a God, small g, of some sort. Yet nearly three out of four believe there is no such thing as absolute truth.

We've been conditioned to believe there is no truth anymore. We've lost it. We've lost it as a populace. And really, those who claim to know Christ don't live much differently from anyone else around them.

[8:04] And we know that the statistics in Australia, probably even in America, that less than 40% of Americans attend church. Not that attending church is necessarily certainly not going to save you.

But it's just a reflection, isn't it, of the society we live in. Only 60% gave money to a church in the last year. And the majority of people who profess Christ just drop out of church within six to eight weeks.

This is what's going on. We're in a bad state worldwide. And God's plan is to call the church to mission. We're called to this, people of God, to mission, to serve as a missionary outpost on a hostile frontier.

And Australia is hostile to the gospel, isn't it? You know, you don't know headhunters and cannibals, but they're just to, they would if they could, I think.

Some people, you know, they're nationalists with their teeth, so to speak. They hate the gospel. Some people get a foam at the mouth when you mention Jesus to them. This is the world we live in. [9:09] And we're called to conduct a search and rescue mission in enemy territory. Now let's look for a moment at a pioneer missionary. If you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the immensity of the task around you, it seems like it's a hopeless task, really.

A never-ending series of obstacles and opposition, failures and frustrations. Take heart. Learn from this man. This man whom God used to launch the modern missionary movement.

He started to think outside the square of the western nation. This man is William Carey. He was undereducated, underfunded and underestimated.

He was brought up in abject poverty. He never had the benefit of high school. Carey's formal education ended in primary school. Yet at age 12, Carey taught himself Latin.

He wasn't playing Pokemon. He was learning Latin. And he went on to master French, Greek, Hebrew and Dutch.

[10:20] And he became a professor of Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi at the prestigious Fort William College in Calcutta where the civil servants were trained.

From primary school to such a knowledge that he had. And Carey and his co-workers started over 100 Christian schools for over 8,000 Indian children of all castes.

And he launched the first Christian college in Asia at Serampore which continues to this day. And Carey finally succeeded in translating the Bible into six languages.

And the New Testament and Gospels into 29 other languages. Phenomenal. Carey's achievements are all the more astounding when you consider that this bold project to plant the Gospel among the Hindus in India was completely illegal.

By an act of the British Parliament it was illegal for missionary work to be done in India. And for the first 20 years Carey's mission to India had to be carried out with ingenuity and care.

[11:31] And Carey was subject to vicious criticism and gossip under the extreme Indian heat. In dangers of snakes and crocodiles and tigers in the remote mosquito ridden jungle house Carey's wife Dorothy went insane.

on several occasions she attacked him with a knife. She was diagnosed insane and had to be physically restrained for the last 12 years of her life.

And the Carey's lost their five year old son Peter who died of dysentery. And every family member suffered malaria, dysentery, other tropical diseases.

What's more Carey's first co-worker squandered all their money and bankrupted the mission forcing William to work on a plantation to provide for his malnourished family.

And in their first seven months in India the Carey's had to move five times. And although the Carey's wrote home frequently it was 17 months before they received their first letters.

[12:39] Imagine that. 17 months labouring before their first letters. And one of the first letters from the society criticised Carey and they described him as quote swallowed up in the pursuits of a merchant.

They were having a go at him. They thought he wasn't really there for the fair dinkum reason. And somehow while often sick, holding down a full-time secular job surrounded by domestic turmoil with an insane wife screaming from the next room, Carey mastered Bengali and Sanskrit and by 1797 the New Testament was translated and ready for printing.

And he established these several schools while preaching tireless toil. Yet Carey, after seven years of tireless toil, still did not have a single convert.

How did he manage this? These crushing disappointments, this intense workload, the undeserved criticisms, the physical ailments and the heartbreaking tragedies?

How did Carey manage to persevere, to endure, to keep on keeping on and without the encouragement even of a single convert to justify all of his efforts and sacrifice?

[13:59] It took a resolute faith. He was totally sold out to serving Jesus Christ. He was determined to declare that message, wasn't he?

How can we learn from him? Here's another one. Now, I had to search very carefully for this one to find a photograph of this man, the Apostle Paul.

Of course, they didn't have film in those days, but here's a representation of the Apostle Paul. And here he is on Mars Hill.

And I was privileged to go to Mars Hill and stand on Mars Hill as a boy and then as an older man, to stand where the Apostle Paul stood, where the Acropolis overlooking with all the heathen, pagan idols and worship centres of pagan Greece all around him.

And he was declaring forthrightly this message. And there's a tongue-in-cheek letter that someone's written here as if Paul was appointed to become a missionary today.

[15:05] And all the reasons why he wasn't a good candidate, today. All the reasons why he shouldn't even apply, he shouldn't even think about being a missionary. And so here's what this kind of tongue-in-cheek letter says about his health.

We've received an application from you for service. We've made an exhaustive survey of your case, but we're told that you're afflicted with a severe eye trouble. So this is certain to be a handicap to effective ministry.

We require 20, 20 vision. Financial pressures. It goes on. Do you think it's seemly for a missionary to do part-time secular work? Here he is making tents to support himself.

They were saying, we wonder why there's only one church supporting you, the church of Philippi. We wonder why. You've not got the financial backing. Another cross against you.

Public opinion. Is it true that you have a jail record? Certain brethren report that you did two years' time at Caesarea and was imprisoned at Rome. And you made so much trouble for the business people at Ephesus when you had a go at Diana of the Ephesians.

[16:20] You know, sensationalism has no place in missions. And then there's the lurid over-the-wall episode at Damascus. We're appalled at your obvious lack of conciliatory behaviour.

Diplomatic men are not stoned and dragged out of the city gate or assaulted by furious mobs. Have you ever considered, have you ever suspected that gentler words might gain you more friends?

And they say, I enclose a copy of Dallius Carnagos' book, How to Win Jews and Influence Greeks. Now, public opinion was against Paul. And then radical faith.

In one of your letters you refer to yourself as Paul the Aged. Our new mission policies do not anticipate a surplus of elderly recipients. You know, too old, Paul.

And then we understand you're given to fantasies and dreams. At Troas, you saw a man of Macedonia and you claim you were caught up into the third heaven. We need more realistic and practical minds.

[17:26] On compromising, you've written many letters to churches where you were formerly a pastor. In one of these letters you accused a church member of living with his father's wife and you caused the whole church to feel badly.

And the poor fellow was expelled. Uncompromising. Flexible. Your ministry has been far too flighty to be successful. First Asia Minor, then Macedonia, then Greece, then Italy.

Now you're talking about a wild goose chase to Spain. You cannot live the whole world by yourself. You are just one little Paul. The word Paul means little.

And in a recent sermon you said, God forbid that I should glory in anything save the cross of Jesus Christ. It seems that to us you ought to glory in our heritage, our denominational program, our budget.

committed to delivering the word of God. Your sermons are much too long for our liking. At one place you talked until midnight and a young man fell out the window, so sleepy, and broke his neck.

[18:39] Then Dr. Luke reports you're a thin little man, bald, frequently sick and always so agitated over your churches that you sleep so poorly. A healthy mind and a robust body are our requirements.

And then you talk about fighting the good fight. Fighting is hardly a recommendation for a missionary. No fight is a good fight. Jesus came not to bring a sword but peace.

They got that around the wrong way, didn't they? And you boast I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus. What on earth do you mean? Some people acted to Paul like they were wild beasts tearing him apart, tearing into him.

And so it hurts me to tell you this brother but I've never met a man so opposite to the requirements of a missionary with our mission board. And if we accepted you we'd break every rule of modern missionary practice.

You're sincerely Flavius Fluffy Head. You know, this is the kind of, everything was against Paul wasn't it? He was inadequate in the world's eyes.

[19:49] And so do we brothers and sisters. We can't measure up. But yet, what's stopping us? What's stopping us? And so the ultimate fulfilment of God's plan is that we all be a part of this mission.

You know, it says in 1 Peter 2, but ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.

Why? That you should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness and into his marvellous life. We're meant to show forth his praises in this darkened world.

Elsewhere it talks about shining his lights, doesn't it? To be his witnesses, to be his ambassadors. There's a part every one of us can play. There's a part that you can play.

Never underestimate the power of humble things in the hand of God, placed in the hands of God. Now we can all feel at times like we're inadequate, we're not significant, what we do or don't do doesn't make much of a difference.

[20:57] That's what we can think. But reflect on this. The space shuttle Columbia had a delay.

And it points to the importance of little things. The space shuttle's flight was postponed because of a clogged oil filter. Just needed a few quarts of oil for a change.

Would have been worth about \$25. Yet this setback cost American taxpayers approximately \$3 million per day. Just a little oversight on someone's part.

And in the 1960s someone forgot to remove a dust cover in the Saturn rocket and its giant engine shut down. A costly satellite was lost.

On another occasion another costly satellite was lost because a punctuation mark was emitted from the computer code. and the early return of Apollo 13 which meant a multi-million dollar moon landing was aborted was due to a short circuit caused by a piece of wire worth about 50 cents.

[22:12] Little things can make a big difference. And brothers and sisters you might think I'm little unlike Paul little. God can use you mightily for his glory and praise.

Each one of you, each one of us we all can play a part in God's master plan. To be a disciple ourselves to give out tracts. You know we've got quantities of these tracts there's lots of opportunities just to letterbox get some free exercise while you do it.

You know lots of opportunities to give your personal testimony when you're rubbing shoulders with people at work round about your day by day lives. you can praise people to be saved.

Don't forget to we can all play a part. Friends this mission work we're called to calls for no half measures. Not to settle for half measures.

This is too important. You know Spurgeon was preaching on this text whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. And he said this if Christ should leave the upper world and come into the midst of this hall this morning what answer would you give him after showing you his wounded hands and feet and his rent side and he should put this question to you I have done all this for thee what has thou done for me?

[23:37] Let me put that question for him. You have known his love some of you 40 years some 30 20 10 3 1 he has done all this for you has bled away his precious life has died in agonies on the cross what have you done for him?

Turn over your diary now. Can you remember the contributions you have given? What they amount to? Add them up.

Think of what you have done for him. How much of your time have you spent in his service? And that also turn up another leaf. Observe how much time you have spent in praying for the progress of his kingdom.

What have you done there? Add that up. And I will do so for myself and say without a boast I have laboured to serve God and have done as it says do whatever he tells you.

John 2 verse 5. And he goes on if you truly want to serve Christ do not do what you feel like doing but do what he commands you to do. That's largely what he said here.

[24:54] Do what he commands you to do. What a great tragedy it would be to neglect this. Now I know something of neglect.

Julie and I have a house where the previous occupier has let it go run down. Very run down. Very neglected. And it's like everything that I look at needs fixing. Now what about the neglect of spiritual things for instance?

Allow me to share an example of neglect. Of something too important to neglect. Something too important not to share. Now in the car industry car makers try to design breakthroughs and they design some special new features.

They build them into the next model. And they keep these very secret don't they? They kind of hide the car. They don't want people to see the car too early because it gives the competition the heads up what they've designed.

[26:02] So they keep everything secret. It's very secretive. And a company that can offer a new and desirable feature on its cars has a coveted selling edge in a tough market.

Now here's a picture of a Mercedes Benz. It's seen its better days this one. You can see a Mercedes Benz. I could have been really high tech and put a video on here but you've just got to imagine the boom.

How was that? Improvisation. Now here's a Mercedes Benz showing a car being crashed into a brick wall in a safety test.

And the way it withstood the impact revealed why its energy absorbing construction has saved lives. And even though Mercedes Benz holds the patent on the safety design, they allow the competitors to be designed.

Why? Because the company does not enforce its claim. Why? A spokesman for Mercedes Benz says because some things in life are too important not to share.

[27:20] Some things in life are too important not to share. Can't we think that of the gospel? people, it's too important not to share. And when I see this house that has been in neglect, and I see everything needs fixing, it seems like everything has been left.

I think, what of our mission? What of your mission? What of our mission? My mission? Has what is so important become that which we neglect?

And Christian, brother, sister today, your life is too important to neglect this truth, to invest in anything less than the creator's plan to redeem the cosmos.

It's too important not to share, isn't it? This message that we have, it should be in our hearts and on our lips, that's been entrusted to us. It's too important to keep it secret.

It's too important to keep this from those who are lost and perishing. Without him. Friends, people are searching. They are searching still for meaning, for purpose, for hope.

[28:34] And we have a heavenly hope. We have an eternal hope, an assurance of our soul, an eternal life. We know our Lord and Saviour gives us hope and meaning and purpose.

And 1 Peter 3, 15 it says, Peter writes, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope, the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Our Lord calls us to the Great Commission. And this mission we are called to can be possible. We started off by talking about meaning and purpose, about people searching yet not finding, people searching left empty, hopeless, lost.

We talked about the master plan. Go ye, he says, into all the world and preach the gospel, take this message with you. Today's mission field is far and wide and it's as close as our neighbours away. And the very needy world in which we live is very needy. We saw the example of William Carey. Everything was against him. Primary school, that was it.

[29:58] Yet a life lived, poured out, spent for the kingdom of God, glorifying God, despite his circumstances. We saw how Paul himself had much against him, yet he was used of God.

We look at how the most humble and least of people have an important part to play. Just as the smallest component on some huge technological spacecraft, every one of us has an important part to play.

There's people you can reach that I may not have got their ear off and vice versa. We all have a part to play in this mighty mission. He calls us, away from half measures, to work with all of our mind, all of our gusto and zeal and strength.

And why? Because this mission is too critical, it's too important to neglect this, this message is too important not to share. More important than the safety features on a Mercedes Benz, isn't it? It's way too important to neglect. And so the reason for the hope that is in you, that belief today, searching multitudes are crying out for the answer, for the reason, for the hope that is in you.

[31:14] Though most of them don't realise it and they put some weak substitute in its place. You know, Julie and I saw them down at the sports field, in the rain, commitment, determination, searching multitudes are crying out, filling that emptiness with some further emptiness really.

And you have the hope that they need. You have the reason for the hope. It's within you. Let it be coming out of your mouth and imparted. The only cause that can satisfy your need for meaning and purpose, the only cause worthy of your life is to be part of God's plan.

Each one of you, to spread the good news wherever you can, however you can. Let's make this mission a priority for our lives and commit all of our energies to this one goal, to this end, to this mission, this one purpose, to make Christ known and to show forth his praises as his holy people. Your lips your legs, your voice, your heart, his message, good news for bad people. How can we not share it?

How can we not declare it? How can we not make that determination, that commitment, that resolve, that choice?

[32:44] It's choice, isn't it? you can choose to just neglect this message and put it on the shelf and just file it away in the dark recesses of your mind or you can start to put it into action.

Friends, I pray, let's be encouraged. We may not be like William Kerry and learn multitudes of languages, may not go to some distant nation, yet we can share that message with someone, can't we?

We must, we must. It's too important not to share. Let us pray. Our Lord God and King, our worthy Lamb of God, our Saviour, we bless your name.

We thank you Lord that you've deigned to step down from heaven to impart life to us and a hope in us. And Lord, help us to be transmitters of that hope.

Help us to be transmitters of that message. It's too important not to share. Lord God, help us, give us the gumption, give us that voice to speak it, to say something.

[33:56] Help us Lord when we feel like we don't know what to say, give us the words we need. Help us Lord, especially guide us to those who are searching that we might impart to them this life changing message and this glorious gospel, this good news that is eternal and precious.

Help us Lord, that we might be those messengers that you need, that you call us to, that this mission be possible, even here, even now, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.