

Obeying the Great Commission - Part 2

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Date: 16 September 2018

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[0 : 00] First, let me join with Lyndon in welcoming all of our guests this morning.! I want to begin this morning in the same way I began last week's sermon.

! That's not to say that the other sermons aren't important. They are. But like last week's sermon, this morning's sermon is important in a different way. It's important because it will cause to answer the question that is a very important question. It is this. Is our Christianity biblical? Is what we do biblical? The lives we live? The activities we engage in like this morning?

Is it biblical? And so I'm thinking about this question really on two levels. One, on the level of ourselves in this local church.

[1 : 16] And then on the level of the church generally. The church that we observe in our part of the world. Is the Christianity that we practice biblical? Is the Christianity that we practice supported by this Bible?

And I think all of us know that one of the realities of life is we can drift. Drifting is a reality. And sometimes we're not even aware when we have drifted.

And that's why this morning this is so important for us to consider from Scripture. Is the Christianity that we practice individually, as a local church, in our part of the world, is it biblical?

Before considering this morning's sermon, I want to just briefly take a couple of minutes to recap last week's sermon.

Last week we looked at the Great Commission and we found the Great Commission in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And we saw that the Great Commission is the means by which Christ calls his followers into his mission to call others into his mission.

[2 : 40] That's the Great Commission. And Christ's mission is to reconcile sinners to God on the basis of his perfect life and on the basis of his sacrifice on Calvary's cross.

And so the Great Commission is a call to all those who follow Christ to become involved in this mission as disciples.

And to be a part of this effort of reaching out to others and calling them likewise. To turn from sin and trust in Christ and be one of his disciples.

Who in turn will make disciples involved in this mission of Jesus Christ. We looked at the activities that are involved in the Great Commission.

We summarized the activities of the Great Commission into three main activities. Number one, proclaiming the gospel. Number two, baptizing believers.

[3 : 45] And number three, discipling believers. And then we considered what each of these activities involve. And so if you missed last week's sermon, I want to encourage you to listen to it at some point.

But for this morning's sermon, I want to consider an aspect of the Great Commission that is often overlooked. It's found in Luke's account of the Great Commission only.

It's not found in Matthew's. It's not found in Mark's. We find that in verse 49 of Luke 24. We didn't read it last week.

But it is connected to the Great Commission. Luke, who also wrote the Gospel of...

Well, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Luke also restates this aspect of the Great Commission in his opening section of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

[4 : 53] So if you have not yet done so, would you kindly turn in your Bible to the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. We're going to be reading verses 1 through 11.

But I want to begin by reading Luke 24, 45 through 49. You don't need to turn there.

You can just turn to Acts chapter 1. But if you would just listen, then we're going to read Acts chapter 1 together. Luke 24, starting in verse 45.

This is Luke's account of the Great Commission. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.

And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

[5 : 56] And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are closed with power from on high.

And let's read Acts chapter 1, verses 1 through 11. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. So if you have another translation, it will read slightly differently.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. Until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, You heard from me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

[7 : 22] So when they had come together, he asked them, they asked him, sorry, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.

And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by him in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

[8 : 26] This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word this morning. Lord, we bow our hearts, asking that you would grant his illumination, that you would speak to our hearts in ways that only you can.

Lord, open the eyes of our hearts. Help us to see light in your light and truth in your truth. But most of all, Lord, help us to consider our own lives and help us to live in light of the truth in your word.

I ask that you would grant me grace that I would be faithful to proclaim your word to your people this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

It's my intention to allow for questions and answers after the sermon. So if you have any questions as we go along, just make a note of them and you'll have an opportunity at the end to ask.

[9 : 49] The Great Commission is a command from Christ to his followers to join him in his mission. As I said before, this mission of Christ is to save sinners.

And those who repent and turn from their sin, those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, are forgiven and they are made sons and daughters. This is a command.

This is not optional. If you've come to Christ, this command is binding on you. It's not for the selected few. It's not for the pastors and the leaders in the church or the more mature Christians.

It is for every single person who commits to Christ. You are automatically enlisted as one of his disciples in his mission. And how we do or how we don't do is another issue.

But all of us who have come to Christ are in this mission. So it's a command. But what happens, I think, a lot of times is when we hear this command, when we recognize that we are called into the mission of Christ, we can actually become so wrapped up in fulfilling that command that we can overlook a very important aspect of what the Great Commission entails.

[11 : 31] And how we are to actually fulfill it. The aspect of the Great Commission or a promise, a very important promise that is connected to the Great Commission that we overlook is this.

The Holy Spirit empowers Christ's disciples to fulfill the Great Commission. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers and enables the followers of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission.

He is the one who enables us to join Christ in his mission of reconciling sinners to God and calling them to likewise be disciples.

But we often overlook it. We forget that we have been promised help in this mission. And this is what I want us to consider this morning.

I want us to consider this promise that God has given. This help that has been promised to us in fulfilling the Great Commission.

[12 : 45] And this morning I have two simple points that I want us to see from these opening verses in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The first one is the necessity of the Holy Spirit's baptism.

The necessity of the Holy Spirit's baptism. Look at how Luke begins starting in verse 1. In the book of the Holy Spirit, he opens by addressing a man by the name of Theophilus.

The same man whom he addresses when he wrote his gospel, the gospel of Luke. And in the gospel of Luke, Luke explained his reason for writing his gospel to Theophilus.

And he explains it this way. In as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us.

It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

[14 : 05] What Luke is saying to Theophilus is that there were others who were eyewitnesses and they wrote their gospel accounts like Matthew, like John.

He says, likewise, because I had knowledge of these things, I thought it would be good for me to write an orderly account for you, Theophilus, since I've followed these things very closely.

So obviously what Luke is telling Theophilus is, Theophilus, I'm not an eyewitness, but I've investigated these things. I've set out to give you an orderly account of these things.

So Luke was a historian who investigated the life and the ministry of Christ.

The Gospel of Luke is what Jesus began to do and teach. And the Book of Acts focuses on the obedience of the apostles and the preaching of the gospel through the conversion of sinners and the establishment of churches.

[15 : 27] So notice how Luke opens in verse 1 in the Book of Acts where he says, In the first book of Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.

Jesus began to do and teach those things in the Gospel of Luke. And what Luke is proceeding to do now in the Book of Acts is he is proceeding to give Theophilus an account of what happened after Jesus ascended into heaven and the apostles took the Great Commission and began to be faithful to fulfill the Great Commission.

Jesus began to do and teach and teach and teach and teach and teach and teach and teach.

So let's not overlook that. This is the beginning of it. And what should be clear to us is that the Great Commission is multigenerational. It's been almost 2,000 years since Jesus gave the Great Commission to his initial followers.

And the Great Commission continues and there is still much work to be done. And humanly speaking, we would probably all be dead before the Great Commission is accomplished.

[16 : 52] Yet, of course, God is not limited by what we see humanly speaking. God is able to stir our hearts to engage in the Great Commission and to bring it to its fulfillment.

In verse 2, Luke is no doubt, when he refers to the commands that Jesus issued, he is no doubt referring to the Great Commission, the commands that he gave through the Holy Spirit to his apostles.

He is referring to the Great Commission. And in verse 3, he is underscoring the certainty of the resurrection, the certainty that Jesus arose from the dead. And Luke said, Jesus didn't just show up to them on one occasion.

He says, he actually, he says in verse 3, he presented himself alive to them after suffering by many proofs.

By many proofs. In many occasions, it was certain that he was alive. And that was important because why would you want to go and give your life to proclaim a message if the messenger himself was executed and that was the end of him?

[18:11] The reason the apostles were able to go from being cowards who were hiding in an upper room to men who all except one that we know of literally died a modest death is because they were certain that the one who commissioned them died and rose from the dead.

And that he truly was God in the flesh.

In verses 4 and 5, look at what Luke writes. And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you heard from me, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Now why is this significant? Why? Here's why this is significant. This is significant because even though the Great Commission was important and important enough to get started preaching the gospel starting in Jerusalem and going to Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth. Jesus ordered the disciples not to start, not to go anywhere until they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. This helps us to see the necessity of the Holy Spirit and his baptism for the work of the Great Commission that the Lord Jesus had entrusted to his disciples.

[19:53] And by extension to all other disciples who would come to believe on him through their mission, through their work. Jesus told them, I don't want you to go anywhere.

Don't leave Jerusalem until you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Now I know whenever the term baptism with the Holy Spirit or baptism in the Holy Spirit or baptism of the Holy Spirit or by the Holy Spirit comes up, it conjures up all kinds of questions in people's minds and even sometimes confusion about what it is.

Many of us have had experiences around that phenomena of the moving of the Spirit and the work of the Spirit.

And time doesn't allow me this morning to delve into that, to even begin to try to address some of the questions that you may have in mind. But I will share a couple of thoughts towards the end of the sermon.

But for now, whatever baptism in the Holy Spirit means, whatever it means, Jesus said to his disciples, don't you leave and start in the Great Commission until you receive it.

[21:13] He said, don't you leave and start in the Great Commission. He said, don't you leave Jerusalem until you are baptized in or with the Holy Spirit. Whatever that means. Whatever it means, it was necessary and not optional for them to receive it before commencing with the Great Commission.

So here's how the disciples ought to have received it. Even if they didn't, and truth be told, I don't think they knew exactly what they were promised and what they were to expect.

I don't think that they knew because this was unprecedented. What we read about over in Acts chapter 2. They had no context for this.

They did not know what they were going to receive. But here's what they should have known. It's necessary. It's necessary. Whatever he has promised us, whatever he has told us not to leave Jerusalem until we receive, it is necessary for this Great Commission, this great mission that he has called us in.

It's not enough to be personally determined and personally committed to fulfilling the Great Commission.

[22:37] That's not enough. We cannot fulfill it based on our sheer commitment and our sheer energy. We will only fulfill it through the Holy Spirit.

We need the Holy Spirit and his baptism to engage in the Great Commission. And so for those of us this morning who are followers of Jesus Christ, and who have been thinking about the Great Commission, I wonder if you're thinking about it the way the apostles ought to have thought about it, when the Lord says, you go nowhere until you receive this.

Have you connected the promise of the Holy Spirit to the Great Commission?

And have you seen that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is necessary for every person who will participate in Christ's mission?

Well, if you haven't, I think this should encourage you. I think if there's been some reluctance in your mind thinking, I don't know about that, I'm not so sure I could be engaged in the Great Commission, this should encourage you this morning to realize that you're not just sent into the Great Commission with your hands swinging.

[24:02] But we're sent into the Great Commission with the promise of the Holy Spirit, with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to do the work that Christ has called us to do.

And this leads me to my second point. The reason for the Holy Spirit's baptism. First, necessity of the Holy Spirit's baptism, and second, the reason for the Holy Spirit's.

Why do disciples of Christ need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Well, we see the answer in verses 6 through 11, in the concluding verses of this passage. First notice in verse 6 that the disciples were preoccupied with something other than what they should have been preoccupied with, and that was the Great Commission.

They were preoccupied with finding out from Jesus whether he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time. And Jesus, in verse 7, answers them, but he doesn't give them the answer they want.

[25 : 21] Look at what he tells them in verse 7. He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

He says, that's not for you to know. Jesus, in a sense, was saying to them, You're focusing on really what is not your business.

You're focusing on something that really does not concern you. It's the Father's business, and he has fixed a time, And he has determined these seasons.

They are in his power and within his control. But in verse 8, he directs them to what they should be concerned with, the Great Commission. Look at what he says in verse 8.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

[26 : 26] Now, when the Holy Spirit was referenced earlier in verse 6, All Jesus told them was that we're going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is the promise of the Father.

You're going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. But here in verse 8, he gives the reason. He says, But you will receive power.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

The reason for the Spirit's baptism is to empower believers to fulfill the Great Commission.

So the power of the Spirit is not in a vacuum. And let's be clear about this. It clearly had to be something that they didn't have before the Spirit came.

[27 : 41] Because Jesus said, you need to wait to receive this power. If the apostles were never intended to fulfill the Great Commission by themselves.

They were never intended to finish it. We talked about this last week. It was an impossibility.

Humanly speaking, For those 11 disciples to whom the Lord gave the Great Commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

And that wasn't God's plan. What Jesus told them was that it would happen through them making disciples and teaching those disciples to observe what he taught them.

And so it is a... Discipleship is a process by which we reproduce workers for the mission. We are saved into the mission. And we are discipled.

And we are to disciple others. So that they disciple others. And then the work actually is accomplished. Now think about this. Obviously the promise, since the disciples, the original disciples were not the ones to do all the work of the Great Commission.

[29 : 04] The same power that they needed is the same power that other disciples needed. And so this empowerment of the Spirit is for all believers, not just those original disciples.

Those who happened to be present hearing Jesus. Or those who happened to be in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

Now, exactly what is the baptism with the Holy Spirit or the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Baptism by the Holy Spirit. What do these terms mean? But really, they are one and the same. And the only difference is each one has a different preposition.

With, and, of... And I could have put by. But they are all the same. They are actually no different.

[30 : 12] But for some people, whenever they hear baptism in the Holy Spirit or baptism of the Holy Spirit, they think about speaking in tongues. And they think about people acting in uncontrollable ways.

They'll see people doing things that, oh, he has the Spirit or she has the Spirit. But Spirit baptism is the empowering work of the Holy Spirit that takes place in the life of every believer at his or her conversion.

And the key scripture in support of this position is 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 13.

It's projected for you. You don't need to turn there. Paul writes, For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Notice for a moment if you go back to verse 5. It says, It says, For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

[31 : 39] Isn't it not interesting that we clearly can see from John's baptism that it was immersion. Yet, it's referred to as baptism with water. You'd almost think like he took the water and threw the water on them and says baptism with water.

No. They were baptized in water, but it's referred to as baptism with water. And I think it's a similar kind of picture that we see in verse 13 of 1 Corinthians, chapter 12.

This idea of being overwhelmed by the Spirit, this idea of drinking of the Spirit as it were. And Paul says this happens to all of us, not some of us.

I mean, think about it this way. Why would God ordain it such that it is necessary to have the power of the Spirit to be engaged in the Great Commission, and then leave it optional for people in terms of whether they receive the Spirit's baptism or not, which is what some Pentecostals will say.

They'll say, well, it's up to you. You need to seek. You didn't seek long enough. Or you're not sanctified enough. Or whatever. And they say some receive and some don't receive. And largely, the explanation for a lot that goes on has more to do with manifestations of the Spirit, as opposed to the baptism of the Spirit Himself.

[33 : 19] And so what we see in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, is this is an experience that all believers experience at conversion. Paul says, for in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and were all made to drink of the one Spirit.

I mean, think about that. It would seem that it would be enough for him to say we were all baptized with one Spirit, into one body.

We were all baptized in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body. It would seem sufficient to say that. Why does he say that we were all made to drink of one Spirit?

There's another picture there. There's another picture there. And this happens to all of us.

You know, we don't baptize ourselves in water. We are baptized in water. And we don't baptize ourselves in the Spirit.

[34 : 28] We are baptized in the Spirit. So the point is, it is a common experience to all believers. But historically, Pentecostal denominations from like around the early 1900s, historically, they've taught us that the evidence that you've been baptized in the Holy Spirit is that you speak in tongues.

And if you don't speak in tongues, then you're not baptized in the Holy Spirit. And that is bad doctrine. One of the reasons it's bad doctrine is because it has undoubtedly caused some people to manufacture tongues.

To say, I am baptized in the Holy Spirit. But the witness of Scripture, the witness of New Testament Scripture, is that tongues is but one of the gifts.

When we are baptized by the Spirit into one body made to drink of the one Spirit, that is the gateway to all the gifts that God gives to his people. And they are multi-faceted, varied gifts that God gives to his people.

Not just the spectacular ones that the Corinthians were enamored about. There are all kinds of gifts that God gives to his people. There's a broad spectrum of gifts.

[35 : 48] But the gateway to all those gifts is conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit. And tongues is not given to every believer in the same way that no other spiritual gift is given to every believer.

In 1 Corinthians 12, verse 11, this is what the Apostle Paul writes, speaking about how the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts.

He says this. He was talking about spiritual gifts starting in verse 1. And he says, All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

And you read further in... Actually, I'm going to go ahead and read it. I didn't plan to, but... I think I should go ahead and read it.

Towards the end of chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, Paul is concluding he wants to make a point. So he says this, starting in verse 27.

[36 : 53] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

And then he asks this question. Are all apostles? The obvious answer is no. Are all prophets? The obvious answer is no.

Are all teachers? Again, no. Do all work miracles? No. Do all possess gifts of healing? No. Do all speak with tongues? No.

It is a gift. The Spirit gives the gift to whom he chooses in accordance with his own sovereign dealings and workings.

And so what is important for us is to recognize that at conversion, we are baptized with the Holy Spirit. We are equipped and empowered for the Great Commission.

[38 : 05] And God is free to use us and distribute to us whatever gifts he chooses by his own sovereignty.

And here's what's interesting about the gifts of the Spirit. I didn't plan to go this far, but I'm just going to jump into another part of 1 Corinthians 12.

And part of it is the way some people are looking at me and I thought I should just say a bit more.

Let me start in verse 4. You can turn here. Turn here with me.

1 Corinthians chapter 12, a second verse 4. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 4. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 5.

Paul says, Now there are varieties of gifts for the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service for the same Lord.

[39 : 14] And there are varieties of activities. But it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. And then he goes and he lists nine different gifts, which is not exhaustive.

So when you represent them, we can go in other parts of Scripture and see other spiritual gifts that are there. But my point is this. While I believe that we can draw from this that there are particular gifts that God may, through the Spirit, may give to particular people, we should also bear in mind that these gifts could also be circumstantial.

Not just in a vacuum. Not just in a vacuum. So here's what I'm thinking. A conversion. The sovereign Spirit can, as he chooses, distribute a particular gift or more gifts to any one of us, to all of us.

But away from that moment of conversion, you can be in a particular circumstance involved in the Great Commission, where the Spirit as well can give in that moment a particular gift that is useful, helpful, enabling for you to fulfill the Great Commission moment that you engaged in at that point.

[40 : 51] And that's the main thing I wanted to draw with that. What we see is that the promise of the Spirit is connected to the Great Commission.

Now, when we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, for example, we also see the working of the Spirit in the gathered church and Paul lays down instructions on how that's supposed to happen, how we're supposed to manage spiritual gifts, people prophesying or speaking in tongues, which we should allow and not allow.

But I think we have overlooked the aspect of the gifts of the Spirit and the empowerment of the Spirit for the Great Commission.

And I do think that it would make a difference if we begin to think about that and say, you know what, I'm empowered in this way because I am a believer.

And I'm not alone as I decide to go and talk to my friend or talk to a family member or talk to this person who I'm sitting on the side of for the next three hours on an airplane if the opportunity comes up to talk about Christ.

[42 : 13] I'm not alone in doing that. The Holy Spirit is with me and he has empowered me to do this. Back in 2011, we preached through the letter of 1 Corinthians.

And I preached three particular sermons on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And there was also a question and answer period. Well, I took a Sunday, if my memory serves, to answer questions on this particular topic.

These sermons are not on the website currently, but we're going to try to get them uploaded this week if possible. And for those of you who want to go back and listen to those, you're free to do that.

If you have questions as well, shoot them to me and I'll do my best to answer that. Now, here's a legitimate question as I thought about all of this. I think a legitimate question is, why don't we see

very much of the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of those who have been converted and who, like I say, have been baptized with the Holy Spirit at their conversion?

Why is it that we don't see more of the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, those of us who have been converted and filled with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit?

[43 : 50] I'll give two quick reasons. There are more. I'll give two quick reasons. One, Scripture tells us that we are to be filled with the Spirit.

It's not just a past abandoned our conversion, but we have to be filled with the Spirit in an ongoing way. We're told not to be drunk with wine, but to be filled with the Spirit in an ongoing way.

And the second reason I would offer is the power for the work of the Great Commission.

The power of the Spirit is not to give me wonderful personal supernatural experiences. The power of the Spirit is not to cause me to have a badge of super-spirituality.

The power of the Spirit is to enable us to be engaged in the Great Commission. And the power works when we work.

[45 : 16] The power operates when we operate. It is for that particular activity.

And so imagine what it would look like if all of us who have come to Christ and who accept and embrace our call to join Him in His mission.

If we lived our lives working and raising children and caring for our families and going to the food store and going to the beautician, going to the barbershop, and going to the gym, and doing whatever we do, as we live our lives, we do so with the awareness that we are part of Christ's mission and that He has empowered us for that mission and we begin to share the gospel with people as we have opportunity.

It's going to look differently for all of us. I don't think any one of us has the exact same circumstance and we are all very different. We're in different seasons of life. And you live long enough, you will go through different seasons of life.

But we are called to be faithful to the Great Commission in whatever season of life we find ourselves in. In verse 8, we're told that the Spirit empowers us to be witnesses.

[46 : 49] In the original language, in the Greek language, the word for witnesses is the word from which we get our English word, martyr. It is a person who willingly dies for what he or she believes.

And the truth is, people only die, they only willingly die for what they truly believe. There are many people who have been given the opportunity to recant.

And sadly, this happens in so many countries even today. Where, for example, some Muslim groups will just cause people to renounce Christianity, renounce and to proclaim Islam.

martyrs are those who willingly die for what they truly believe.

And the power of the Spirit enables us, enables Christ's disciples, to be willing to die for Christ and to die for his mission if they have to.

[48 : 08] And that's the reason for the power of the Spirit. And see, brothers and sisters, think about that.

This, almost a morbid word used for witnesses, it tells us this is not just somebody who's going to just basically share information they are not vested in.

And when you think about the fact that the Holy Spirit empowers us to be able to be faithful unto death. That pales in comparison to when there may be someone we want to share the gospel with but we feel a bit intimidated or afraid or nervous.

The Spirit empowers us to be able to do that. And I can tell you from my own experience and I can tell you from the experience of others, I've had times where I felt fearful, apprehensive, awkward, all sorts of other things.

And it was only in the moment that I felt that once I made the decision to step forward, the power of God was there, the help of the Spirit was there.

[49 : 19] It was much easier than I thought it would be because we don't do this on our own. The Spirit empowers us, the Spirit helps us. In verse 9 we read that as Jesus spoke to the disciples as they were looking up.

He was lifted up in a cloud, took him out of their sight. Look at verse 10. And while they were gazing into heaven, as he went, behold, two men stood by them in robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

Brothers and sisters, verse 11 is the promise of Christ's return, a promise that is repeated elsewhere in Scripture. When Christ returns, the Great Commission ends. When Christ returns, there will be no more preaching of the gospel, no more baptizing of believers, no more discipling of believers. This idea that when Christ returns, you'll have some other opportunity, just don't take the mark of the beast, unbiblical.

[50 : 38] When Christ returns, he returns to the end, when he returns, there will be no more preaching of the gospel, no more baptizing of believers, no more discipling of believers.

The day of Christ will usher in the judgment of the world. He will reward believers, he will punish unbelievers. And this is why we who have trusted in Christ must see the importance of being engaged in the Great Commission.

This morning, I received a text message that a dear family friend passed away.

Someone I did my best to try to share the gospel with. His mother tongue is not English, so I'm not exactly sure how well he understood what I had to say.

And I don't know if he knows Christ. I don't know if he came to the place. I pray that others walk in his paths who were able to clearly proclaim the gospel to him in his language and for him to understand it.

[51 : 55] As I was preparing and I was finishing up this morning and I checked my messages and I saw that he passed away last night. And I was just impressed in my heart about the importance of the Great Commission that when Jesus Christ returns there's no more opportunity.

Or when a person dies there's no more opportunity. And Christ has called every single one of us whom he has saved into his mission.

And every single one of us is to be faithful within our circumstances and the boundaries of our lives and the opportunities that we have and they look different.

Some of us have more opportunities than others. All that's required of us is for each of us to be faithful to the opportunities that God gives us moment by moment day by day.

And I want to say to us again let us not miss the opportunities right in our households right in our families. It is not trying to go to another island or go to another country.

[53 : 04] It is being faithful wherever we are sharing the gospel. And when we clearly proclaim the gospel to others whatever they do with it or not we've been faithful to the Great Commission.

That is our job. whether they respond whether they are converted that's no measurement of the Great Commission or its effectiveness. The Great Commission is that we will be faithful to proclaim that message.

So I just want to encourage us to hear fresh this mission of Jesus this mission that we are in it's just a matter of whether we're going to obey or disobey or be effective or be ineffective let us embrace the opportunities let us pray that God will open our eyes to see them and to remind ourselves we are empowered by the Spirit to be witnesses for Jesus.

I'm going to pray and then take some questions. Let's speak through our hearts this morning help us to be faithful to the Great Commission we ask in Jesus' name.

any questions? I think this was about last week no questions?

[54 : 44] no questions? Thank you.