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Sermon Notes

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The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

We come at last to the final words of this incredible Gospel of Matthew... what an incredible journey it's been! This is my 152nd sermon in Matthew... I began preaching the genealogy of Matthew 1 on December 20, 1998, almost fifteen years ago. Today, we come to the thrilling climax of the Gospel—the Great Commission!

In many ways, these verses are the most influential and the most quoted in the entire Gospel of Matthew, although many in the Sermon on the Mount might be more. But I have personally heard many sermons on these verses, the Great Commission. Here we have one of five so-called “Great Commissions,” one of five times the risen Lord Jesus Christ entrusted His church with the task of taking the gospel message to the ends of the earth. Each of the four Gospels ends with a “Great Commission,” and the Book of Acts begins with one.

The advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ from 120 believers huddled in the upper room to the staggering extent of the Christian church today. Christianity is the largest religion in the world today—2.18 billion people identify themselves as Christian—almost 1/3rd of the world's population. Of that number, roughly 300 million identify themselves as either Pentecostal, charismatic, or evangelical—these three categories are not mutually exclusive. The total number of genuinely regenerate people only the Lord knows... but the number is probably somewhere between 300 million and 1 billion. ASTONISHING! And these people live in every single political nation on earth! Let me say that again: there is not a political nation on earth that has no Christians at all!! Joshua Project.net lists 238 political nations, and the top three most unevangelized are Pakistan and Nepal (both 97.4% unevangelized), and Afghanistan (94.9% unevangelized).

But there is still work to do... the last half of the 20th century brought incredible clarity and movement to the work of missions. Let's stop for a moment, and try to understand the difference between evangelism and missions: Missions is not the same as evangelism. Evangelism is sharing the gospel with any unbelievers, and that work will never be done till Jesus comes. Missions, on the other hand, relates to people groups, not just people, and the number is finite and relatively stable — like the “every people, tongue, tribe, and nation” of Revelation 5:9. **So missions is crossing a culture, learning a language, and planting the church through preaching the gospel among people groups that have no churches strong enough to evangelize their group.**

Led by Donald MacGavran and Ralph Winter of the US Center for World Missions, we have come to understand the UNFINISHED TASK of missions in terms of UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS...

"For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance" (Source: 1982 Lausanne Committee Chicago meeting.)

In most parts of the world lack of understandability acts as the main barrier and it is appropriate to define people group primarily by language, with the possibility of sub-divisions based on dialect or cultural variations. Such a list may be referred to as an ethno-linguistic list of peoples.

According to the [Joshua Project](#) (as of October 2, 2013) there are 16,804 people groups in the world. 7,289 of these are "unreached" (fewer than 2% evangelical).

Defining things somewhat differently, the [research arm of the Southern Baptist International Missions Board](#) estimates 11,310 people groups, of which 6,405 are unreached and 3,100 are "unengaged" (no evangelical mission effort to reach them is underway).

That is the work still ahead of us this morning! This is a work for EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN TO EMBRACE!! The members of FBC have three options when it comes to world missions: GO, SEND, DISOBEY.

The goal of all this is the glory of God in the worship that John describes in Revelation 7:9:

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

I. The Foundation for the Commission: The Finished Work of Christ (vs. 16-17)

A. Overarching Theme: The King of the Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

B. The Purpose Statements:

Matthew 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

C. The Finished Work of Jesus Christ

1. Presented as the Promised Son of Abraham and Son of David
2. Predicted by the Angel
3. Presented as King to the Magi
4. Persecuted by Herod
5. Proclaimed by John the Baptist
6. Predicted by the Prophets
7. Proved by His Miracles and His Teaching
 - a. A river of signs and wonders coupled with the message of the Kingdom

Matthew 4:23-25 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

- b. Astonishing teaching: Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of the Kingdom
8. Preparing His Disciples
 - a. Calling disciples to follow Him in His mission
 - b. Training them to preach and heal; sending them out
 - c. Revealing Himself to them as the Son of God
 - d. Teaching them to make the ultimate sacrifices as He would

Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

9. Getting them ready for the end of the world (Matthew 24)
10. Paying for the Sins of His Disciples

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

11. Dying and Rising Again: Full Salvation Completed!!

a. The atoning work paid for in blood

Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:50-52 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ ¶ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵² The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

b. The resurrection achieved with power and glory!!

Matthew 28:5-6 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

Matthew 28:9-10 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

So... that is the review of the whole Gospel of Matthew...

Now to our final text:

Matthew 28:16-17 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

D. The "Eleven Disciples" = The Apostles... Humanly Speaking, the Foundation of the Future Church

Ephesians 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

E. The Trip to Galilee

1. Jesus had predicted this very trip before He died

Matthew 26:31-32 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." ³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

2. The angel had told the women to tell the disciples that Jesus had gone ahead of them into Galilee (28:6); Jesus had told the women to give the disciples the same message: GO TO GALILEE!!
3. This was their home base, where they all were from, where they had first met Jesus
4. There, by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus had first called them to their work

Matthew 4:18-20 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

5. Now He would give them His commission to do precisely that to the ends of the earth

F. Their Encounter With Jesus: Worship Mingled with Doubt

1. Amazing that they still doubted!!
2. Some commentators speak of the different appearance Jesus had
3. Others say it proves none of them were expecting a resurrection... they were all SKEPTICS on this point
4. Amazing that Jesus chooses such poor building materials to build His church!!
5. Remember this statement:

Matthew 12:20-21 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. ²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope.

6. Luke 24 speaks of doubts as well

Luke 24:36-38 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?"

7. "Many convincing proofs" needed

Acts 1:3 *After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

8. Proofs like this one:

Luke 24:39-43 *Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

II. The Authority for the Commission: Overcoming All Obstacles (vs. 18)

Matthew 28:18 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

Authority = the right to command... the right to RULE

In our day and age (as in every one), we sinners struggle with authority and rebel against it

The initial message on authority should be understood in two lights:

First: The overarching theme of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!!! Jesus is the KING of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN... He has the RIGHT TO RULE all of creation!! This is not a usurper taking something that doesn't belong to Him... it is rightfully His

Secondly, we should understand the authority of Jesus as NECESSARY to OVERCOME ALL OBSTACLES to the spread of the Kingdom

Six facets of His authority

A. A Submissive Authority

1. "All authority ... has been GIVEN to me..."
2. Jesus "received" His authority from His Father... this authority is not independent from the Father
3. As we saw in Gethsemane,

Matthew 26:39 *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

4. So also now... Jesus' authority is derived from God the Father... and Jesus uses it to bring everything back to the Father

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

5. Psalm 2: "ASK OF ME"

Psalm 2:7-9 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

B. An Absolute Authority Over Creation

1. Jesus said "all authority in heaven and on earth"
2. This is the extent of all creation

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Colossians 1:15-16 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

3. Jesus rules over all spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms... and Satan CANNOT STOP the advance of the Kingdom!!
 - a. Satan is called "the ruler of this world"... the prince of the power of the air... the god of this age
 - b. BUT by dying and rising again, Jesus has DESTROYED him who held the power of death and has FREED his former slaves to serve God instead
 - c. Satan, that powerful ruler of the world, cannot stop Christ from spreading this gospel and building His church!!
4. Jesus rules over all the Kingdoms of the earth, and there is not a political, military, or religious power on earth that can stop the spread of the Gospel

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, "Mine!" — Abraham Kuyper

5. We should keep in mind that every part of this planet belongs to Jesus Christ! He is not the usurper... Satan is! And his Satanic puppets sitting on thrones in communist countries or Muslim countries... they are FORBIDDING THE SPREAD of the Gospel and making it ILLEGAL... but they are the ones who are illegal!
6. So, when the Saudi rulers make it illegal to spread the Gospel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, we should have no qualms of conscience... "ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH" is Jesus'
7. When the Communist government in China makes house churches illegal and swoops in to arrest house church pastors, we should not quail before that and say, "Well, it's their country, they can make the rules!"
8. When the increasingly bold secularists try to push Jesus further and further out of the public eye in the USA, we should not hesitate to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name!!

Matthew 28:18 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

C. Reasons for Obedience

1. The authority of Jesus also overcomes the obstacles of a reluctant church

Psalm 110:1-3 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ² The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. ³ Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.

Will we be WILLING in the day of Jesus' battle???

Two things in the great commission give us what we need

- 1) Jesus' authority to command us
- 2) Jesus' promise to be with us every step of the way!!
2. There is a direction link between the authority of Jesus and His right to command us to do evangelism and missions
3. Look at the grammar again:

Matthew 28:18-19 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations

4. Because I have all authority, I have the right to command you to go
5. Go and do what? To take up our cross daily and suffer to advance the gospel

6. Satan and his evil people will not give up their territory easily or without a fight
7. We must be willing to SUFFER to make disciples... they will fight us every step of the way!

D. The Center of the Message

1. The authority of Jesus Christ is the center of the gospel message of the Kingdom
2. This claim here by Jesus is the consummation of that message.... It is the ESSENCE of the gospel we preach!
3. We are proclaiming to rebels who have been living their lives in rebellion against God that Jesus has the authority to rule their lives
4. We are calling them to surrender their rebellion and submit to Jesus' kingly yoke:

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

That's what "All authority in heaven and on earth" means

E. Guarantee of Worldwide Success

1. Because all authority in heaven and on earth is Jesus', this Great Commission CANNOT POSSIBLY FAIL!!

Isaiah 14:26-27 This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. ²⁷ For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

2. There is not a single elect person who will not hear the gospel or will be kept out of heaven because of Satan's power, or human government's power, or the power of a Muslim imam or a Haitian witch doctor

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

3. Jesus' authority will providentially open doors

Revelation 3:7-8 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ... See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

4. Jesus' authority over rulers will be made plain by astonishing decisions favorable to the gospel! That's why our PRAYERS for world evangelization will be so effective

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

5. Key question: are we submitting gladly to this command of Jesus' to make disciples of all nations???

He has absolute right to command... are we acting like He doesn't? He owns all our money, our time, our possessions, our children, our health... when missions costs everything we have to give, can we say that Jesus did not have the right to demand it??

The difference between the obedience of the church and that of the world to Christ's authority is this: we do it knowingly and out of love... the world does it unwittingly by the hidden sovereign power of God while they HATE Jesus!!

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

III. The Goal of the Commission: Make Disciples of Jesus (vs. 19-20)

Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

A. What is the Goal of the Great Commission? MAKE DISCIPLES!

1. The goal of Christ's incarnation was the salvation of sinners
2. He came to "save His people from their sins"
3. He came to "give His life as a ransom for many"
4. He came to "rescue them from the dominion of darkness and transfer them into the Kingdom of the Beloved Son"
5. He came to call His sheep out, to go ahead of them and make them into one flock under one shepherd
6. He came so that they would inherit the Kingdom of His Father and be with Him forever and see His glory

7. He came to save HUMAN BEINGS from eternity in hell, to enjoy instead ETERNITY in HEAVEN

B. The Beginning of Discipleship: Repentance and Faith

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

1. A disciple is a learner.... Someone who has put his whole life in the hands of the master
2. It is a deeper, richer, fuller relationship than a pupil in a school
3. It involves sacrifice, following the master wherever He leads

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-- yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

C. The Command is Plain: Go into all the world and preach this message of life

1. The central verb here is "make disciples"
2. The supporting concept is "as you are going"
3. So, everyday life involves making disciples
4. BUT we should also acknowledge the need for travel to the ends of the earth (more on this in a moment)

D. The Discipleship is Church-Based

1. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
2. This is the beginning ordinance of membership in Christ's church
3. Salvation spreads by means of the local church... it is right for the IMB to focus on CHURCH PLANTING... parachurches do not baptize...
4. The Trinity are deeply involved in this: the ONE NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
 - a. The Father elected His people by His sovereign grace before the foundation of the world
 - b. The Son died for the elect whom the Father chose
 - c. The Spirit regenerates the elect

5. Also a strong plug for believers' baptism here: first make them DISCIPLES, then BAPTIZE them!!

E. The Discipleship Extends to the End of their Lives... It is the INTERNAL INFINITE JOURNEY

1. Teaching them to OBEY EVERYTHING I HAVE COMMANDED YOU
2. Jesus' commands are absolutely comprehensive
3. We should not think this way

Romans 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

4. Christ's laws cover every inch of our bodies and every moment of our lives

1 Corinthians 9:21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law)

5. The first to receive this extensive training and commands were the Twelve Apostles... so Jesus says "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded YOU"
6. This points to the ongoing need for TEACHING, good solid doctrine in the life of the church
7. The Great Commission continues in my life until every area of my life is subject to the commands of Christ... that I am OBEYING His pervasive authority
8. This is the focus of the gospel ministry in a healthy church... not merely being a "soul-winning" church that thinks its job is done once they pray the sinner's prayer
9. Thus the shoddy workmanship of some missions efforts in the past that were driven by mass communication and quick commitments but no intensive discipleship... that was NOT THE GREAT COMMISSION they were doing
10. For an agency to say, "Our primary concern is the initial conversion of as many souls as possible... We don't have time for intensive discipleship", they should look again at the actual verbiage of the Great Commission, "Teaching them to OBEY EVERYTHING I have commanded you..." and repent. They are not doing what He said to do

F. Teaching Must be Life Transformational

1. We are not merely disseminating information!!

2. We must teach so that the people are actually OBEYING!!

IV. The Extent of the Commission: To the End of the Earth, and the End of the Age (vs. 19-20)

Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This Great Commission is overwhelming in its extent

Not only is the discipleship intensive, such that comprehensive obedience to Christ's commands is the goal for every single convert, but the geographical extent and chronological extent is overwhelming as well...

Geographical extent: to the ENDS OF THE EARTH

Chronological extent: to the END OF THE AGE

A. The Geographical Extent: All Nations... to the Ends of the Earth

1. Throughout the Old Testament, God made it plain that He intended to extend salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

When God called Abraham, it was with the whole world in mind:

Genesis 12:3 all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

When God extended the amazing plague in Egypt during the time of the Exodus, it was with the whole world in mind:

Exodus 9:16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

When the Promise of a Davidic King was made to David and then to Solomon, it was with the distant nations in mind:

Psalms 72:8 He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

When David wrote his Psalms, he spoke of all the peoples on earth:

Psalm 67:1-4 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah ² that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.

When Solomon built and dedicated the temple, it was with all the peoples on earth in mind:

1 Kings 8:41-43 As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name-- ⁴² for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm-- when he comes and prays toward this temple, ⁴³ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

When Isaiah prophesied about the Christ, he made it plain that He was to be the Savior of the world

Isaiah 49:6 It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Fourteen times, Isaiah speaks of the distant islands:

Isaiah 42:3-4 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

2. So, when Jesus was raised from the dead, He made this geographical spread of the Gospel very plain:

Luke 24:46-47 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

3. This is the most exciting story in all human history... I would argue it is the only point of human history!!! *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*

B. The Chronological Extent: To the End of the Age

1. This command was not merely given to the Twelve Apostles... It is a lasting command in every generation

2. The Apostles have died, but the commission continues

3. Jesus' simple statement: "to the end of the age" makes this plain

4. This is the work of the church until Jesus returns and ends human history

V. The Power for the Commission: "I Will Be With You!" (vs. 20)

Matthew 28:20 And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

A. This is the Power for the Commission: Without Jesus' Presence in Power, It Would Most Certainly Fail

B. This Should Absolutely Be Linked to the Power of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

C. This Was the Promise Given to Moses in His Fear

Exodus 3:11-12 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² And God said, "I will be with you."

D. This Was the Encouragement Given to Paul in His Suffering

2 Timothy 4:16-17 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

Acts 18:9-11 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." ¹¹ So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

E. This is What Makes the External Journey a Delight... Learning "the Fellowship of Sharing..."

Philippians 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Could it be that the reason we know Him so little is that we RISK SO LITTLE in evangelism and missions, so we don't know the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings??

VI. The Status of the Commission: Where Do We Stand?

A. The Story of the Advance of the Gospel is the Greatest Story in History Since Jesus Ascended to Heaven

1. At the time He ascended, the officially gathered and recognized church was 120 people in the Upper Room in Jerusalem
2. On the Day of Pentecost, the Number grew to 3000
3. Little by little the world Christian movement spread... by Acts 6, the number of men grew to about 5000
4. Acts 10: Peter preached to the Roman centurion Cornelius, and the gospel advanced to Gentiles
5. The church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the Gentiles, and they were amazingly successful; at the end of the Book of Romans, Paul wrote this:
6. After the Apostolic era, the church continued to grow: the gospel spiritually conquered the Roman Empire and came to dominate Europe, spreading like wildfire among the barbarian tribes of France and Germany and Britain
7. The gospel also conquered the terrifying Vikings... spreading to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia...
8. It is not my purpose to give a comprehensive history of the advance of Christianity... but I once saw a map that showed the geographical spread of evangelical Christianity from the 18th century until the end of the 20th century... before William Carey, evangelical congregations were clustered in Northern Europe, England, and the American colonies and NOWHERE ELSE! Now, there is not a geographical nation on earth with no true church

B. How Doable is the Remaining Task?

John Piper: We should be dumbfounded at how doable the remaining task of world missions is.

AGAIN: According to [the Southern Baptist International Missions Board](#) estimates 11,310 people groups, of which 3,100 are “unengaged” (no evangelical mission effort to reach them is underway).

Does that number sound large to you? 3,100? These are the people groups yet to be pursued and penetrated with a missions effort. The number is, in fact, amazingly small compared to the resources available to us.

Consider these numbers from the January 2013 issue of *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (vol. 37, no. 1):

There are 44,000 Christian denominations in the world — 14 for every unengaged people group.

There are 700 million evangelical Christians in the world – 225,000 for every unengaged people group.

There are 4.5 million Christian congregations in the world – 1,451 congregations for every unengaged people group.

There are 4,900 Christian foreign mission sending agencies in the world – 1.5 agencies for every unengaged people group.

This is simply mindboggling. I am not unaware that most of these 3,100 unengaged peoples are in places and under regimes that are hostile to Christian presence. So I am not saying it will be easy to reach them. It will be very costly.

But if God would grant the passion and courage and wisdom, the remaining task is neither vague, nor enormous, nor unattainable. Would you join me in obeying [Matthew 9:38](#), “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”?

And then be a radical, sacrificial goer, or a radical, sacrificial sender. Jesus has all authority to accomplish this. He promises to be with us to the end of the age as we mobilize for this. What a thrilling prospect!

VII. Applications

A. Come to Christ!

1. What is the point of this sermon on missions if some of you sit here in an UNCONVERTED STATE??!!
2. Listen to some key texts from Matthew to help convince you of the need for repentance and faith in Jesus
 - a. Universality of sin:

Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- b. Terror of judgment day:

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

c. Terrors of hell:

Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

d. Priority of the soul:

Matthew 16:26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

e. Identity and purpose of Christ:

Matthew 1:20-21 Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

f. Provision by Christ:

Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

g. Invitation by Christ

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

B. FBC Members: Let's Make FBC a "Launching Pad" for career missionaries

C. Let's pray more diligently than ever before for unreached people groups

D. Let's GIVE to Lottie Moon AND to Great Commission Fund

E. Let's support our career missionaries better than ever

F. Let each member of FBC challenge himself or herself: what am I doing for the Great Commission

G. Practical training:

1. BFL class on church planting—Ron Halbrooks
 2. City Outreach Conference—Matthew Hodges, Nov. 23,
- H. Practical Opportunities
1. ESL + need for child workers for kids of ESL students