

# The Great Commission, the Great Commandment, and the Great Compulsion

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>37</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind [‘and with all your strength’ (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27)]. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. (Matt. 22:37-38)

### Missions Emphasis Week!

- A. This is now the first Sunday in our Missions Emphasis Week.
  - 1. Obviously, I’m preaching this week.
  - 2. And one of the missionaries we support (we have to be somewhat discreet about this)—let’s call him Bill C.—will be preaching next week.
  
- B. And I love how the GO! Team has divided up and given us our points of emphasis.
  - 1. They’ve asked Bill to come along next week and consider how missions and the goal of reaching people for Jesus in the world relates to the our love for others.
  - 2. My job this morning is to consider how missions relates to our love for God.
  
- C. In light of this, I’m going to organize my thoughts under three headings (which I put there in the title of this sermon): (1) The Great Commission; (2) The Great Commandment; and (3) The Great Compulsion. So let’s get to it!

## (1) The Great Commission

### What Is the Great Commission?

- A. I’m thinking that most of us are aware of what I’m referring to when I say “The Great Commission.” But, to be clear, we’re talking about those marching orders given by Jesus to the apostles (and, by extension, to us) at the very end of Matthew’s Gospel.
  - 1. In the context, Jesus has already been crucified, risen, and he’s here preparing them for the time of his ascension and departure.
  - 2. He’s giving them instruction—how should they live when he’s gone, what should they busy themselves with?
  - 3. And then he says this in Matt. 28:18-20: “<sup>18</sup>All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

B. So what is the Great Commission?

1. It is the mandate that the church has received from Jesus that we not merely sit on our salvation but go with it to the nations.
2. We bring the good news of the gospel to everyone everywhere—to people near and far, to people who have not yet believed and to people who may not yet have even heard.
3. We bring Jesus to them and them to Jesus.
4. We make disciples—
  - a. baptizing them as the sacrament of entry, picturing their union by faith Jesus, going down with him in his death and rising up with him in his resurrection to new life in the Spirit;
  - b. and then we teach them all that he has taught us that they too might know God and begin to walk more and more in his ways.

## What Is the Underlying Motivation?

A. That is the Great Commission. But now I want to ask: What is the underlying motivation?

1. If this is the map and route Jesus has laid out before us, if this is where he wants us going . . . what is the engine and the fuel that gets us there?
2. If this is this our “what”—what we are called to do; what is our “why”? Why do we do it? Why do we go?

B. I can think of many reasons why a person might engage in evangelism and missions—some are legitimate, others not so much . . .

### Motivation #1: Guilt

A. Some people go out and try to make disciples out of a sense of guilt. “Well, I guess I’m supposed to. I see other Christians doing it. I feel like a bad Christian if I don’t.”

B. I personally struggled with this back when I first got saved in college.

1. The campus ministry I was a part of was so big on evangelism.
  - a. This, in itself, of course, is not a bad thing, but it can have bad side-effects if it’s not properly stewarded.
  - b. You create a culture where some feel more like: “I have to share”; not: “I get to share,” “I want to share.”
2. I would feel guilty for walking by anyone and not sharing the gospel with them.
  - a. So I would share, all the time, but not from a real sense of love . . .

- b. . . . from guilt: “Okay, I did my job. God, get off my job. Now, I can feel better about myself. Maybe I’m not such a bad Christian after all.”

## Motivation #2: Pride

- A. This relates to the next motivation we can sometimes have with evangelism and missions: Pride. There can be a competitive spirit: “I want to show I’m a better Christian than you—I’m more faithful, more mature, more courageous.”
  - 1. I share with others, not just because it makes me feel better about myself (guilt),
  - 2. but because it makes me feel better than you (pride).
- B. This is what Paul is referring to [Phil. 1:17](#) when he says that some “[proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition . . .](#)”
  - 1. They’re envious of him, competing with him.
  - 2. That’s why they’re “sharing their faith.”

## Motivation #3: Greed

- A. With this, I’m thinking of the sad part of the history of missions and evangelism and church planting, where some professing Christians can go out “in the name of Jesus” but, truly, they’re guided by self-interest and avarice.
  - 1. This is the prosperity preachers heading over to Africa so they can fill their pockets with the pennies of the poor.
  - 2. It’s the imperialism of earlier centuries, where Western colonial expansion found a suitable cloak in Christian missions.
    - a. With the missionary cause as their cover, they could claim to be “reaching the heathen for Jesus,” while truly just reaching to amass more for themselves.

## Motivation #4: Adventure

- A. Sometimes the thirst for adventure is the driving factor. It sounds fun to go here and there—visit a faraway land.
- B. I know it’s not always true, but I’m tempted to question motives any time I hear someone say they feel called by God somewhere, and it’s one of the more naturally desirable places you could go.
  - 1. “I don’t know what it is. I just feel called to plant a church in Hawaii. Something in my gut is telling me I’ve got to go. I’m going to go suffer for Jesus in the sun and sand. It’s going to be hard leaving behind all I’ve known here to go there and frolic on the beach all day—snorkeling, surfing, eating coconut popsicles, or whatever—but somebody’s got to do it. I guess it’s my cross to bear.”
    - a. Of course, a person could actually be called to plant a church in Hawaii or go on a mission trip to some place awesome.

- b. But just check your heart. Is it a desire for adventure and fun that's driving you, or something else?

## Motivation #5: Love for People

- A. Now, we're moving towards a more legitimate motivation. This may be the one we initially think of when we consider why we should engage in the Great Commission. "I want to bring Jesus to people . . . because I love people. I want them to know him."
- B. This certainly is the sort of thing that motivated Jesus throughout his ministry, right? "<sup>35</sup> Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;<sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest'" (Matt. 9:35-38).
  - 1. This love for others motivated him.
  - 2. And it should motivate us as well.
- C. But, as I said, that's what Bill C. is going to talk about next week: the connection between missions and our love for others.
- D. This week, I want to talk about something that is situated further down underneath even this.
  - 1. What is at the bottom?
  - 2. What is the deepest "why" we can have for missions?
  - 3. What is the fundamental fuel and driving force?
    - a. It is not love for people.
    - b. It is love for God!
- E. A concern for God and his glory, an all-consuming love for God—with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—that is the only motivation that can both set you out on this mission and sustain you, keep you faithful, through the inevitable ups-and-downs of it.
  - 1. And, with this, we discover that behind the Great Commission lies the first and Great Commandment . . .

## (2) The Great Commandment

### What Does It Mean?

- A. Now, we return to those verses I read at the start of this sermon, [Matt. 22:37-38](#). Jesus, responding to the inquiries of some of the religious folks in the crowd, says: "<sup>37</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind [<sup>and with all your strength</sup>] (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27)].<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment."

1. Before I really connect this Great Commandment to the Great Commission, let's first make sure we understand what Jesus is saying here.
- B. Let me begin with this: I do not think Jesus means for us to distinguish here between the various dimensions of our love for God (with the heart, with the soul, with the mind, with the strength).
1. Any attempt at a fine-toothed distinction ends in confusion, it seems to me.
    - a. I'm not sure there's much of a difference between loving the Lord with all your heart and loving him with all your soul;
    - b. between loving him with all your mind and loving him with all your strength.
- C. All four dimensions mentioned here are really just different ways of getting at the same basic point.
1. Jesus means for there to be an accumulating weight to it all.
  2. But the essence of the matter is relatively simple: You must love the Lord your God with everything you have. Your whole being, as it were, is to be consumed with passion for him.
    - a. That's the meaning. That's the first and greatest commandment.
- D. And it's the first and greatest, because, if you get this right, everything else in the Christian life follows out from it . . .

## The Two Tablets

- A. There's a reason why the Ten Commandments flow the way they do. Have you noticed this? Theologians often speak of the two tablets of the Law in this way.
1. On the first stone tablet God gave to Moses up on Mt. Sinai, it seems, we have commands dealing primarily with our love for God—you shall have no other gods before me; you shall not make for yourself an idol; you shall not take my name in vain, you shall keep holy the sabbath day.
  2. And on the second stone tablet, then, we have commands dealing primarily with our love for others—you shall not murder; or commit adultery; or steal; or lie; or covet. Things like this.
- B. The two are related, but the first tablet comes first.
1. Any breakdown in the second tablet, in one's love for man, is the result of some preceding breakdown in the first tablet, in one's love for God.
    - a. For example, the only reason I would murder you, cheat on you, steal from you, lie to you, or covet something you have is if something else has taken the place of God in my heart and you stand in the way of it.
      - i. So I'll hurt you to get it—whatever "it" may be (i.e. this job, that girl, money, acclaim, etc.).

- ii. It is my god, my source of joy and life and satisfaction. So I'll sacrifice you to get it for me.

- (1) It has my love.

- b. But if God has my love, all of my love—all my heart, soul, mind, strength—well, then I am finally prepared to love you as well.

- i. Now, instead of sacrificing you to my god for myself, I sacrifice myself to my God for you (cf. [Rom. 12:1](#)).

- (1) Love for God leads to love for man.

- (2) Concern for God and his glory leads to concern for man and his good.

- C. And here we come barreling in towards the connection I mentioned at the start.

- 1. As it is between the two tablets, between love for God and love for others—so it is between the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.
  - 2. My passion for him pushes me out towards those who need Jesus!

## We Can't Have One Without the Other

- A. In an effort to make this plain, allow me to show you how, when it comes to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, we can't truly have one without the other.

- 1. It's either a package deal or it's no deal.
  - 2. They come together or they don't come at all.

- a. Consider it with me . . .

### Reduction #1: The Great Commission without the Great Commandment

- A. If you have the Great Commission but not the Great Commandment—this means you're doing a lot of work out in the world, a lot of stuff "for Jesus" it would seem, but it's with wrong or, at least, insufficient motive.

- 1. You're driven by something like that list I gave us earlier—guilt, pride, greed, adventure, even love for people.
  - 2. And that's not enough—to keep you faithful, to keep you going, to keep you rightly repping Jesus and the gospel.

- B. Let's take even the best option on that list: love for people. Why would I say that wouldn't be enough? Why, if that's your fundamental motivation, would it still end up undermining your work and the Great Commission?

- 1. Well, think about it: if love for people more than love for God is what's driving you, then, over time, you will be tempted to alter, edit, change the uncomfortable truths of God to make people happy.

2. There are things God wants us to say to people that will not please them, at least initially.
    - a. Nobody wants to hear that, because of their sin, they're headed for hell.
    - b. Nobody wants to hear that they need to repent or perish.
    - c. Nobody wants to hear that, if you follow Jesus, you can't sleep with whoever you want or live in this way or that.
  3. Don't you see? If you don't love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength, you will not go make disciples of all the nations and teach them to observe all of Jesus' commands.
    - a. You'll teach the things that sit better with them and avoid the things that don't.
- C. This is what happened here in America with what's called the "social gospel"—that's now infected so many of the mainline Protestant denominations.
1. With their theology, they started fudging on the hard things.
  2. And then, naturally, their missiology followed suit.
    - a. Missions became more about helping people with their physical needs rather than addressing their spiritual dilemma. Because we don't want to talk about hell. We don't want to talk about sin.
  3. H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book *The Kingdom of God in America*, famously sums up the theological compromise of this group, writing that they preach a "gospel" where "a God without wrath [brings] men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross."
    - a. In other words: This is no gospel, at least not as we find it in the Bible. This is just telling people what they want to hear—because we don't want to make them sad or unhappy or uncomfortable. "God is not that holy. You are not that sinful. And consequently, Christ and his work on the cross is not all that great, or necessary even."
      - i. You don't need saving from hell.
      - ii. You just need a little help with this or that physically, socially, economically, politically—and we're here to offer it.
- D. Now, hear me: Of course, it's a great thing to go and help people with their physical needs and all this—and that is part of our mission, to be sure. As we saw, Jesus went about "healing every disease and every affliction" (Matt. 9:35).
1. But this concern for the physical is meant to be a pathway into the spiritual.
  2. It is not the sum total, nor is it even the main point, of Christian missions.
- E. Christian missions, rather, because it is driven with a passion for the glory of God, and because it remains unflinchingly aware that sinners have fallen short of that glory and deserve God's wrath as a

result, and because we know that the cross of Christ is God’s gracious remedy for the deepest ills that have befallen mankind . . .

1. . . . because of this, Christian missions will not settle for the offer of mere physical aid. No!
2. Instead, it is after the whole rescue of the whole person for their whole life—both in the present, and especially in the age to come.

- a. As Jack Miller puts it, no doubt combatting some of the compromise identified by Niebuhr: True Christian missionaries must “risk unpopularity by preaching the cross as a real cross on which a real Savior shed real blood for real sinners headed for a real hell” (*The Heart of a Servant Leader*, 311).

F. And the only way you’re going to do that is if you have love for God, not love for man, as your ultimate driving motivation.

1. If your highest allegiance is to God not man, then, alongside the more palatable doctrines, you will tell them the harder truths, regardless of how it makes them feel in the moment. Because you know upholding God and his glory is what will be for their ultimate good in the end.
2. If you do love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength, you will go make disciples of all the nations and teach them to observe all of Jesus’ commands.

## Reduction #2: The Great Commandment without the Great Commission

A. What about the other side of this? What if you claim to have the Great Commandment but you aren’t all that concerned with the Great Commission?

B. In our culture today, we tend to think of love as a feeling more than anything else.

1. So it would make sense, given this context, that we think of love for God more as:
  - a. the passion we express for him in our musical worship,
  - b. or the tears that form in our eyes as we pray,
  - c. or the warm-fuzzies we get when we recite one of our favorite promises from Scripture.

C. But that’s not how God considers and evaluates our love.

1. God’s not looking at your raised hands or warm-fuzzies to determine whether you love him.
2. He’s looking at your life.
  - a. And if you’re not going where he’s going, if you’re not loving what he loves—you don’t really love him as you should.

- b. Jesus puts it bluntly for us in [John 14](#): “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (v. 15). In other words: “When you don’t obey me, something’s wrong with your love.”
  
- D. The fact of the matter is, then, no matter how much love we say we feel for God, if we have no feeling for the lost, no concern for their rescue, no obedient participation in the Great Commission mandate . . . then we’re not loving God as we should, not in truth.
  - 1. Something’s off with our love for him if it’s not driving us out towards them.
  
- E. The Great Commandment leads to the Great Commission, and if it doesn’t, you don’t really have the Great Commandment!
  - 1. We’re never allowed to just stay put on our knees in worship, feeling all the feels.
  - 2. We’re always swept up and into the grand purpose of God in the world.
    - a. If he blesses us, it’s to be a blessing to others.
    - b. If he saves us it’s to be a herald of that salvation to others.
    - c. If he washes us in the rivers of his mercy, he will soon catch us up in the current of its flow and carry us with it on out to the nations.
  - 3. Allow me to give you a couple examples of this . . .
  
- F. Remember the Prophet Isaiah.
  - 1. In [Isa. 6](#) he’s given this vision of God on his throne in all his glory.
  - 2. And he comes out feeling unworthy, unclean. “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips . . . ; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (v. 5).
  - 3. But what does God do? He takes a burning coal from the altar and he touches it to his lips, purifying them. He forgives him. The altar of sacrifice is the means of atonement.
  - 4. There’s this beautiful relationship of love established between God and him.
  - 5. But then where does the narrative go immediately after this? Missions: “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me’” (v. 8).
    - a. When you truly have that loving relationship with God it moves you out in love for others.
  
- G. The same could easily be said of the Woman at the Well in [John 4](#).
  - 1. She’s got all this guilt and shame as a result of the relational entanglements and things of her past.
  - 2. But she encounters Jesus there in the heat of the day.
  - 3. He gives her “living water” (v. 10). Grace upon grace. She drinks deep of it.
  - 4. But then what does she do? Just stay there in that loving relationship? No. She runs off to tell others: “Come, [and] see . . .” (v. 29). “This isn’t just for me. It’s for you!”

- a. It's really a illustration of what Jesus says in [John 7:37-38](#): "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"
    - i. I love that. It's not going to sit and store up. Your soul isn't a reservoir for this living water.
    - ii. It's a river. It's going to flow—not just to you, but through you!
- H. The Great Commission requires the Great Commandment, and the Great Commandment requires the Great Commission. You need both or you don't have either.
- I. But what about you? What if you're struggling with these things?
- 1. What do you do if you're trying to honestly evaluate your own life and heart and you realize: I'm not as engaged in the Great Commission as I should be. And I guess that means there is something off in me with regard to the Great Commandment and my love for God.
  - 2. What do you do? Is there anywhere you can go to grow in these things—to rekindle these things?
    - a. Well, here's where we come to what I've called the Great Compulsion . . .

### (3) The Great Compulsion

#### "The Love of Christ Controls Us"

- A. It's already been hinted at in the two examples I just gave.

But this idea of a "Great Compulsion" comes out most plainly in [2 Cor. 5:14-15](#). There Paul is writing about his missionary endeavors, and he says this: "<sup>14</sup>[T]he love of Christ controls us [or constrains us, or drives us, or compels us], because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;<sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." Did you hear it?

- 1. Behind Paul's radical missionary lifestyle is this passionate love for his Savior. "I don't want to live for myself any longer, but for him."
- 2. But behind even this—behind the love he has for Christ—is what? The love Christ has for him. "I want to live for him because he died for me. I love him because he first loved me" (cf. [1 John 4:19](#)).
  - a. Behind the Great Commission lies the Great Commandment.
  - b. But behind the Great Commandment lies the Great Compulsion.
    - i. I see his love for me, which ignites my love for him, which propels me out into the world to love and reach others.

## Go to the Cross!

- A. So, again, where do you go if you're struggling with things—if you're a bit apathetic towards the mission and a bit lukewarm towards the Savior?
1. I'll tell you where you don't go. You don't go to the gym. You don't try to work yourself back into it. You don't try to muscle your way forward, sweat your way to sanctification.
  2. What's the first thing you do? You go to the cross.
    - a. You ask God to help you see, not just what he did for others there, but what he did for you. And you let his love melt your heart. That's how we're changed.
      - i. We're not changed by our brute force.
      - ii. We're changed by God's tender love.
- B. But, you say, I already know what Jesus did for me on the cross. I already know the gospel.
1. I don't care if you "know" it.
  2. You don't know it.
- C. If you knew it, you'd be like that woman at the Pharisee's dinner party—down on her face, washing Jesus' feet with her tears and hair.
1. What does Jesus say when all these religious folks are balking at this?
    - a. "You don't love me much because you don't think you need to be forgiven all that much. You don't see God's holiness and you don't see your sin, therefore you're not moved by my grace."
    - b. "But she loves me this much because she knows she's been forgiven much and it's lit a fire in her heart. She doesn't care that you're making fun of her. She can hear you murmuring. She can see you pointing. But she doesn't care.
      - i. Because she knows my love for her, she has a passionate, even reckless, love for me."
- D. That's what it was for the Prophet Isaiah and the Woman at the Well, right?
1. If you noticed, the whole thing gets started, not first because of their love for God, but because of God's love for them.
  2. He cleanses, he washes, he forgives, he loves. And then they love. And then they go!
- E. This is what Oswald Chambers is getting at when he writes: "We will never understand how to abandon ourselves to God until we understand how God abandoned himself to us. When God gave his Son in love to the world, he didn't give just a part of himself. He gave all of himself, absolutely and entirely. He gave with total abandon, holding nothing back" (Utmost, March 13).

1. In other words: The key to loving God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength, is to see that, in many ways, he himself has already loved you with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind and with all his strength!

a. That's the meaning of the cross. "I love you this much—with all of me!"

i. He didn't just give us half of his heart, a bit of his soul, a few of his thoughts, some of his strength.

ii. He gave us everything. He held nothing back. He poured everything out in love for you and for me on that cross.

F. And, when you get that, it's compelling. "[T]he love of Christ controls us . . ." (2 Cor. 5:14).

1. The Great Commission is driven by the Great Commandment is driven by the Great Compulsion!