

Elder Ron Gannon - New Testament Passages on Evangelism

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Sheila and Carolyn, for that wonderful invitation. This morning, I want to talk about New Testament passages on evangelism.

And this morning, I'm going to, I was going to, when I got to some of the scripture readings, I was going to read what those scripture readings are because they're important. But because of the shortness of time, I think I'll delay that and I won't actually read them, but I'll just talk about those passages.

So when I turn to them, you can just turn to that scripture and just follow what I'm saying there. That would be good. It won't take as much time. New Testament epistles have much to teach us regarding personal evangelism and our responsibilities with respect to those who are outside of Jesus Christ in their life.

We must reach out to them with Christ's love and with God's gospel and the power of the blessed Holy Spirit. Let's look at Romans chapter 1, verses 14 and 16.

And Paul says here, Now, as you're reading that, notice the three words, three great I am's as we read that, personal evangelism found in this passage.

[1 : 44] Number one, I am under obligation. Paul felt a great obligation, a sense of duty. He had a debt to pay every unsaved person.

He owed the gospel to all men. At one point in his life, Saul of Tarsus felt an obligation to persecute every Christian.

But later he felt an obligation to preach to every creature that he came in contact with. Next, he says, I'm ready.

Paul was willing, eager, ready to preach God's good news. Though he was obligated, he did not carry on his duty reluctantly.

Paul gladly and willingly and eagerly preached Jesus Christ. He was ready and prepared and he did it eagerly and gladly. The third thing Paul says is, I'm not ashamed.

[2 : 46] I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Paul boldly confessed Christ and proclaimed his message. May we never be ashamed of our Savior and what he did for us.

Paul was even willing to die to be able to defend the gospel. Today we are also to go out and evangelize those who do not have the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

So where and by whom were we given this commission to evangelize the lost? Well, hopefully that's what we're going to cover in this next 30 minutes.

So what is a commission? Well, commission is a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties for somebody else.

Authority to act for in behalf of or in place of another. In a spiritual sense, it's Christ charging and sending forth his believers to proclaim the message of the truth concerning him.

[3 : 49] And we're going to find in the New Testament several places where Jesus Christ did that. Christ gave several commissions to his followers. Some were while he was here on earth and the other was when he was in glory.

We need to ask questions when we come to these passages with each commission that he directed. Ask yourself, what is the program of this commission?

Is it Israel or is it the church? What gospel does the commission address? What is the overall content of the commission?

Who are the deliverers? And who are the recipients of this commission? Before we go any further, we need to understand that the basis or the foundation of all commissions, regardless of the program, is that of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the foundation. Romans 1.16 says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

[5 : 03] Emphasis must be placed on Jesus the Christ. The power of God to save in any dispensation. We have to have the foundation. Jesus is the one.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 3.10 says, According to the grace of God, which was given to me like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation and another built upon it. But each man must be careful how he builds upon it.

In verse 11 he says, For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, that of Jesus Christ, our Lord. We have to have that firm foundation before we can even start.

The Lord gave three distinct commissions during his earthly ministry, and all three dealt with the prophetic program, the kingdom to come. First, let's turn to Matthew chapter 10 and look at verses 5 through 14.

And what we see here is the Lord talking to his disciples. It's right after that he named these disciples. He brought them on.

[6 : 14] He said, Here the Lord sent out the twelve apostles to proclaim a specific message. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. And as you read this message, he sends these men out.

He gives them certain demonstrations of power and actions. They were to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.

They were to take no money, take no script, take no clothes, and take no shoes. They were to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles.

He specifically said, Do not go to the Gentiles. The kingdom spoken of this message that they presented and they were to preach was a kingdom at hand.

The kingdom spoken by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, all the prophets. So they had a specific message. They were to go out and reach the nation of Israel.

[7 : 16] And Israel only. Now if you turn to the book of Luke in chapter 10 there, we also see in verses 1 through 12, the Lord sent out 70 others.

Now this is not the apostles that he sent out back in Matthew. These are 70 other people that went out to spread the message.

And this must have been just fellow believers who were tagging along and they became disciples of what Jesus was teaching. And he sent these 70 out. And what was their message?

Who is it to? Again, it was to the nation of Israel. Again, it was all pathetic. And again, it was the kingdom message. They were to go out.

And they were to tell the people that when they accepted Jesus Christ and in the chair of the hearts, the peace that they would have upon doing that. If the Jews, if they went to a Jewish household and that household would receive him, then the messenger went into the house, healed the sick.

[8 : 24] And stayed with those people. If he went into this house and they rejected Jesus Christ, they were to proclaim a judgment against that house and they were to leave. And again, they weren't saying that the kingdom of heaven is here.

They were saying that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The next commission given by Jesus is commonly known as the Great Commission. This commission is given in five different places in Scripture.

We see it in Matthew. At the end of Matthew. We see it at the end of Mark, Luke, and John. And we also see it at the beginning of Acts in Chapter 1. Some believe these are five distinct commissions and choose one account over the other as to be the Great Commission.

However, we believe that there are five distinct separate accounts of the same commission. This was during after Jesus Christ was crucified.

This is after he came back. And this is after he spent the 40 days here on earth with his disciples. And he was telling them to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

[9 : 38] These were all given after the Lord's resurrection and before his ascension. And were the last parting words of the apostles, of his apostles here on earth. That's the last time that he talked to them while he was here on earth.

What did this commission contain? Well, Matthew and Mark says, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Now what's wrong with that commission? It sounds great. Go into all the earth and preach the things that I have taught you.

But they were also to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They were to teach them all the commandments that he had given them.

A lot of these commandments were about the kingdom. They were to start their ministry in Jerusalem. We see that in Luke's account.

[10 : 40] The literal city of Jerusalem. Don't try to spiritualize it and say every place is Jerusalem nowadays. It's not. They were to go to the nation of Israel in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is the very center of the kingdom program. It always was. Isaiah 2, 1-4 states that Jerusalem will be the city from which the Lord will rule his kingdom.

He will rule his kingdom in Jerusalem. So it only makes sense that they would start this job, this work of talking to the nations right there in the city of Jerusalem.

They would be there first. They were finally to go out into the whole world and preach the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom gospel. Once the nation of Israel had accepted the gospel, they would go out into all Judea and Samaria and the whole world and preach that gospel.

The whole world was to be blessed through Israel's acceptance to their Messiah. And we see that through the Old Testament. When they accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah, they were to go out and reach the nations.

[11 : 49] This is something new because it was always just a nation of Israel, not the Gentile population. They were to go out and now that they know their Messiah, to go out and bless all the other nations and bring them together.

And they were to become one. So that's what he was instructing them. Once the nation of Israel was accepted, then they were to go out and preach to the world. John 20, 21 says, As the Father has sent me, I also send you.

In Acts 1, and we see there in verses 3 to 8, Christ confirmed that the gospel of the kingdom, he sent them out. And Matthew and Luke and John and all the other places is the same gospel that he's going to send them out to now that he's ascending into heaven.

1, 6 says, They asked the Lord, Is it at this time, Lord, that you're restoring the kingdom to Israel? What did Christ say?

Did he say, No, no, it's not this time that I'm doing this because I've got another program. It's a church. He didn't say that. He just said, No, at this time, it's not for you to know the times.

[13 : 03] And he ascended into heaven. And so the nation of it or so these apostles had one thing in mind, and they were to go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom. And that's what they did.

So they were not. Remember, he had just spent 40 days with them again, teaching them about what he did at the cross. And since he'd been to the cross that he was going to come back.

And establish his kingdom. That's what they were thinking about. That's what they were preaching. And that's what Pentecost was all about. And that's what the whole first part of Acts was all about.

These apostles staying in Jerusalem. Because they never got out of Jerusalem because they were having trouble making their fellow believer or fellow countrymen believe.

Jesus Christ. So they stay there. They did what they were supposed to do. They stayed in Jerusalem. And they stayed there until we get into the chapters 7, 8, and 9 of the book of Acts.

[14 : 10] And then we see something different happening. We see the nation of Israel is given a chance again. When Stephen addresses him there to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives them the whole history of the nation of Israel.

All the way back to where Jesus Christ was put on the cross. And he told them, you're the ones that put him on that cross. Accept him as your personal savior.

And they gave the answer. They stoned Stephen right off the bat. They didn't even hesitate. They took him out. Ripped him of his clothes.

And put him down there and stoned him to death. And there was a man standing there who willingly put out his arms and put your cloaks here while you throw those stones.

And that man was named Saul of Tarsus. And we see here that something different, something new is going to happen here in the book of Acts.

[15 : 06] So what is our commission today? Is there any of the commissions that we've talked about so far? No, I don't believe our commission today is the same commissions that Jesus Christ gave.

I mean, the first part of those commissions is, yes, go out and reach the world. Go out and reach the world. But today our message is different. Because it's about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The grace of God. The church. And what it's all about. So the Lord gave another commission from glory to the Apostle Paul. Here the Apostle Paul was a man that nobody but even thought or dreamed of that would go out and reach Christ.

Teach Christ. Because he was completely against the new believers. And he went out and he persecuted them. Until Jesus Christ met him on the road to Damascus.

And that's where he had a life-changing experience. And from that point on, he had a new desire in his heart. What do you call that? Being born again?

[16 : 14] The old self was done away. That old sinful nature. And he put on the new nature, which is the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ. And from that day on, he had something different in his heart.

He had something different to say. Instead of persecution, it was believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. A new message. One of the things we can think about here is why there was this difference was at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles and those who believed.

But there was something missing there at Pentecost. And what was it that gives a distinction between the kingdom and the new grace message that we hear today? They preached Jesus Christ.

Believe upon him and you will be saved. But they were talking about the kingdom. And what does it say in Matthew 24? Before that kingdom comes in, what happens to happen?

Desolation of desolations will come. And at that point, those desolations had not come yet. And as of us today, it still has not come yet. So the things talked about in Matthew 24 have not taken place.

[17 : 29] So the kingdom cannot come in until that time. And so when the apostle Paul got his message, it was to go out and to preach nothing except Jesus Christ crucified.

He went out and he taught. He established churches. And they believed upon him. And what did they do?

They went out and they also preached. I did a study on Colossians not too long ago. And it was interesting. I went through there and did some studying. And the apostle Paul never went to Colossians.

Although he wrote a letter to the people in Colossians. But he never went to the city of Colossians. So how did they find out about the message of Jesus Christ?

Evidently, somebody in another city, it could have been Philippi, it could have been one of the other towns, heard the message that Paul wrote or was given out there in that city. And he believed.

[18 : 29] And he believed. And when he went back to his home, he started telling other people. There's this man who's teaching Jesus Christ that he died for all the sins of the world.

And that's the Messiah has come. And people believed. And that's how the church at Colossians was established. It wasn't established by the apostle Paul.

It was established by somebody who had heard the message and came back, presented that message, and they started a church. And it just grew. And it grew. And it's exactly the way Christianity has always grown.

We've always had a contingent of missionaries, the apostles that went out. Now we have missionaries that go out. But the biggest majority of believers believe today because of folks like you sitting here in the audience today.

You go out and you talk to your neighbors. You go out and you talk to people at work. And you go out and you talk to family. That's evangelism that we're talking about.

[19 : 36] So where do we get this commission that I'm talking about? Well, we need to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And what does it say there? Verse 18 reads, In all things of our God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ reconciled us to God. Christ accomplished this reconciliation on the behalf of everyone at the cross. God today is not holding anyone's sins against him because Christ died for those sins.

When we believe and receive Christ, we are reconciled to God in a permanent way. What do I mean by that? Because Christ died for the sins of the world, we now come before a holy and righteous God with our slate clean.

The rest of verse 18 reads, In all things of our God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has committed to us, committed to us the word and the ministry of reconciliation.

Folks, that is a commission. He's asking us to go out on his behalf. Jesus Christ is asking that. He's coming through glory to the Apostle Paul.

[20 : 55] And the Apostle Paul is now preaching it on to us. It's to go out with the ministry of reconciliation. He committed it to us. What does commit mean?

To put in charge or trust. To entrust. We've been entrusted with the best message that there ever has been said. The gospel of Jesus Christ. What does reconcile or reconciliation mean?

It means to restore to fellowship. When did we lose that fellowship? When Adam and Eve sinned. When innocence was taken away, we lost our fellowship with the Lord or with our Father.

Because he cannot accept anything except perfect, holy, and righteousness. And folks, we don't have that without Jesus Christ. All those people in the Old Testament, through all those thousands of years, never could measure up.

They had to have something special. And there's always been a remnant of people that believe that we all have that sinful nature, and we lost that fellowship with God.

[22 : 06] Obviously, for man to have God as his enemy is a lost cause for man. What is the only thing available for us? Belief upon Jesus Christ, or death and hell?

That's our only options. He needed a mediator, and God in his grace provided one. The God-man who is the Lord Jesus Christ, he was the mediator. He hung on that cross for all the sins of the world.

So, we could never satisfy those sins. And we had a death penalty. Jesus Christ took that death penalty for us, and he hung on that cross.

Verse 20 says, So be ambassadors for Christ. Ambassadors, authorized representative. Today, we can be an authorized representative of Jesus Christ.

All we have to do is present Jesus Christ to those who do not know him. We have the ministry, and we have the word. To tell others about Jesus Christ. Verse 21, Tell the lost that God made Christ to be sin for us.

[23 : 09] Christ who knew no sin, knew no sin, that we might have the righteousness of God through him. No sin at all, that he died, so that we could have that righteousness through him.

God looks at me at a whole new person. He sees me as somebody that's completely new. My heart has been reshaped. He has given me new life.

And in that life, he wants me to do something for him, and that is to go out and be a witness for him to others. So, God made this known through Paul, his secret message in Christ, to reconcile all things unto him.

Based upon the merits of the cross, according to the riches of his grace, it was a mystery to include Israel in unbelief with the Gentiles, and then to reconcile both unto God at the body of Christ, or on the cross.

Do you get that? Gentiles were always in unbelief. The nation of Israel was God's chosen nation, but he chose to make them also a nation of unbelief.

[24 : 27] If they wouldn't believe, and then go to the nations as Gentiles to bring them into a one body, then God chose to make them unbelievers and come in with the message, the mystery of Jesus Christ, and the fact that Jews and Gentiles will become part of the church and become one body.

And that's what he wanted from the beginning. And that's what he's done through the mystery. This is the revelation that constitutes the dispensation of the grace of God and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation and the mystery.

So what is this mystery all about? Exactly that. Jew and Gentile on the same page. Never before in history was Jew and Gentile on the same page.

Now, during the church age, we have Jew and Gentile. Everybody is on the same page. Everybody is in the same place. And all we have to do is accept him.

And he will come into our life and send the Holy Spirit into our life. And he will change us, whether what nationality, what race, it doesn't matter. He died for all men so that all could have the grace and glory of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 48] The reconciling of believing Jews and Gentiles in one party and one body is the heart of the program for the day. It's accomplished through proclaiming the ministry of reconciliation, the gospel of the grace of God.

Let's consider four questions concerning this commission. What is the program of this commission? Again, is it the nation of Israel? Or is it the church, the body of Christ?

Well, we know today it's the body of Christ. That's our mission. That's the commission that we have. What is the gospel? The gospel of the grace of God. Period.

Period. He says, All men through faith alone, not of any works. Go to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 10.

For it's not by works that we are saved, but it's through Jesus Christ and He shed blood so that we can be the workmen. And that's what He wants us to be.

[26 : 46] He wants us to be the workmen for Him. What is the content? It involves our heavenly calling. We receive our spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

What kind of special blessings that we have? Just read the book of Ephesians. Chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3. List blessing after blessing that we receive the moment that we accept Jesus Christ in our life.

All these blessings are ours. All we have to do is take them into our life and act them out. We are blameless. We are forgiven. We are redeemed. Sealed. United in one body.

And we have an inheritance also. And that is our hope. Our hope is the secret coming of Christ to rapture us away to glory. Who are the recipients of this commission?

Well, the message was received by Paul. Paul now gives it to us. And we're to give it to the whole world. So again, we're going back to the same commissions that Jesus Christ gave His disciples.

[27 : 54] Go into the whole world and present Jesus Christ. The foundation, Jesus Christ. Never forget what the foundation is. We have only one apostle on the dispensation of grace and God used him alone to give the message to the world of that day.

It is our turn to give that message back to those who do not know Jesus as their Savior. So when we go out in our ministries, let's not follow the commission of the kingdom. All that does is cause confusion.

But follow Paul in the commission to preach the gospel of reconciliation to every person we can. Let people know they can also have this fellowship again with God that they've lost, that they desire.

Or maybe they don't never desired it. But once they know the whole story, they will want to have that reconciliation. We are to offer salvation to all through believing the good news of the gospel.

We are to help men to understand the mystery program so they can grow in grace, be established in the faith, and not to be tossed through and fro. We are new creatures in Christ, reconciled to God.

[29 : 09] We are ambassadors for Christ. We are His personal representatives. I don't know if that sounds good to me. I am Jesus Christ, personal representative.

If I can go out and I can explain Jesus Christ to other people. He's given me a job to do. We need to represent Him well. God has given to every believer the mystery of reconciliation.

We need to do it. He makes His gospel to sinners, makes His gospel known to sinners through us. God does not speak to these people individually now.

Now, there's other people, there might be people out there today that said, Oh, God talked to me. And I'm not going to defute that. I'm sure God does speak to some people today, maybe.

But I do know that He doesn't talk to everybody. I know He hadn't talked to me except through somebody else. And that's what He wants us to do. He wants us to talk for Him through Jesus Christ and what He did at the cross.

[30 : 10] 2 Timothy 2.10 Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Jesus Christ with eternal glory.

I endure all things for the elect's sake. There's people out there today who would say, Well, wait a minute. We don't need to go out and preach the gospel for the elect.

If there are the elect, they're going to be saved. It doesn't matter whether we preach it or don't preach it. Well, I don't believe that.

I don't think Jesus Christ works that way. Or God doesn't work that way today. He works. The elect are going to be saved. But if they're going to be saved, it's going to be because of you and me and all the others in this world that's just like us.

Through the message that we give to them about Jesus Christ. I think if somebody doesn't tell them the story, they're not going to get it.

[31 : 14] Now, I can't say that people will not accept Jesus Christ on their own because I know there's people that's done that. But the majority of the people have to hear somebody talk about Jesus Christ.

I forget the man's name. Bill Somebody that had the book that says that when you're going out to evangelize, when people hear the message, how many times do you have to hear the message before you even get an idea about accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior?

I think he talks about seven times. The first time you hear about God, probably nothing. The second time, wait a minute, I've heard that before. The third time, you know, this sounds feasible.

It's a progressive thing for most people to hear about Jesus Christ and accept him into our life. My own testimony, I went to church all my life from a very small person up until I was in my 30s.

And I knew Jesus Christ. I knew all about him. I knew that all the New Testament scriptures about Jesus Christ, the Gospels, I don't think I ever got into the epistles, but I knew all the Gospels.

[32 : 35] I knew about Jesus Christ. I knew about his crucifixion. And I came into this church and I sat down there and I heard messages from Marv that talked about you have to turn your life over to Christ.

It's not good enough to know about Jesus Christ. You have to turn your life over. And as I sat there one morning when they was doing communion, I said, I cannot take communion.

I do not know Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. And I walked out of here without ever taking communion. I've taken communion many times in my life. But that morning, I knew that I was a sinner.

I was lost. And that week, I accepted. I accepted. The Lord. And it wasn't through Marv up here giving an invitation to come down.

It was just through a message. And some other people had talked to me and I'd heard that. And finally, it just clicked. And I needed the Lord, Jesus Christ, into my life.

[33 : 37] And that's what it's all about. And that's what our commission is all about is to go out and preach Jesus Christ crucified to anybody that will listen.

And folks, I know it's hard, especially for our family to go out and talk to our family because who knows me better than my family?

They know me. They know what I was. They know what I can be. So it's hard to talk to our family, but we need to do that.

We need to talk to our friends. We need to talk to people at work, not during work hours. Don't disturb what you're getting paid for. I'm not saying that, but talk to people.

Just talk to people. Well, that's a good thing. Amen. Present the message. There's other new testament scripture that we can give.

[34 : 33] Ephesians 6 talks about speaking boldly for Jesus Christ. Speak boldly. Don't hold back. Speak, Colossians 4, speak for the mystery of the Christ.

Speak forth the mystery of Christ. Tell about the mystery that Christ died. It's not the kingdom, but it's the church. First Thessalonians, entrusted with the gospel.

We've been entrusted again. We're entrusted with the gospel. Second Thessalonians, pray the word of the Lord will spread rapidly. How will that happen? You've got to get it out so other people can get it out so other people can get it out.

First Peter 3, 5, always be ready to make defense for the hope that is in you. Folks, we have to know why we believe what we believe. And we need to be able to present that to other people.

Father, thank you. Thank you for the Paul and his message about being ambassadors. By your grace, you have given us new life in Jesus.

[35 : 35] And by your spirit, you have called us to proclaim his name to those who do not know you. Father, give us the strength and the willingness and the wisdom to be a witness for you today.

And I ask these things today in Jesus' name. Amen.