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Romans 1:16-18; 3:10-11, 23; 6:23; 10:13-15 “Made For A Mission”

Intro. We have almost completed our 40 days together! So far we've looked at God's different purposes for your life. One foundational truth that we have learned is that life is preparation for eternity. You're going to do four things in heaven forever and ever. And God wants you to practice those here on earth. First is worship, to know God, and express your love for God. The second is to fellowship, to learn to love each other. The third is discipleship, to learn to become like Christ. And the fourth was service, to learn to use my SHAPE, my abilities for God in serving Him.

Now, once you've got those four down, you come to the fifth purpose, which is the only purpose you can only do exclusively on earth. You were made for a mission. Last week we talked about how you need a ministry in the church. You also need a mission in the world. You need a ministry to believers and you need a mission to unbelievers.

The ultimate goal of our mission to unbelievers is "evangelism." Evangelism is based on the Greek word for "good news." That's all it means. It means to share the good news. And so the Bible says that once I know the Good News, God wants me to pass it on, sharing the Good News with others.

My assignment today is probably the most difficult in this series of messages. I need to convince you of the need for evangelism. Then I need to show you the personal responsibility we all have for evangelism. Next I will show you that God will enable you to win unbelievers. Finally, I will tell you where your mission field is. So let's see first of all:

I. PEOPLE HAVE A NEED FOR EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH

There are 2 main reasons why the church must continue the mission of sharing the good news with all the world.

A. Because of the Sinful Condition of Man – Romans 3:23 says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” No one is exempt from the human condition of sin. Romans 3:10 says, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Everyone listening to me today has sinned. Everyone you know at school, or at work, or in your neighborhood has sinned against a holy God.

Some may ask, “So we've all sinned. So what? Everybody does it.” Look over to Roman 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death....” Physical death is separation of the body from the spirit. Spiritual death is separation of the spirit from God. Look over to Roman 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men....” You can deny the wrath of God if you want to stick your head in the sand, but that doesn't make it so. If you want to see the reality of the wrath of God against sin, then just look at the cross of Jesus! Think of how much He suffered. There you see a strong evidence of the wrath of God against sin. Look all over the earth. You will see layers and layers of sedimentary rock. Why is it there? Well the Bible says God's wrath was poured out upon an ungodly world in the form of a flood. So unless a sinner finds forgiveness, he or she will face the eternal wrath of God.

In the next 365 days, 2.4 million Americans will die, and most of them will go into eternity without Jesus Christ. In the next 365 days, 54 million people in the world will die; most of them will go into eternity without Jesus Christ. Those numbers are almost too difficult for me to bear. Does that concern you?

There's another problem with the sinful condition of man. People will not seek forgiveness on their own. Romans 3:11 says, "...There is none who seeks after God." John 3:20 says, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." By nature we are like sheep that are always going astray (Isa. 53:6). People do not seek God and repent of sin on their own. People stay away from churches in droves. So they need help. They need both divine and human intervention. God will do His part, but we must do our part.

There is a recurrent thought pattern that is found in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it goes like this: "If people want to become Christians, they will come to church and find out how. Our church doors are open. Let them come, and hear, and be saved." Often we do not openly say those words, but that seems to be the way we feel. But there is one main flaw with that supposition; it assumes that sinful man will seek out God. That is an unbiblical assumption, as we have seen.

There is also a need for evangelism because:

B. Because There Is Only One Way to Be Saved - We are living in a day in which many deny a need for missions and evangelism, for they say there are many ways to God. We should just let people find their own way. Jesus certainly taught differently. He said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Do you know what is one of the strongest arguments against the idea that there are many ways to God? Once again, look at the Cross! If you have seen Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, then you know how much Jesus suffered. If people can be saved many different ways, then why did He bother to suffer so much? As Paul said in Gal. 3:21, "...if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." If people could be saved any other way that through the suffering & death of Christ, then it was rather foolish for Jesus to go through so much suffering. After all, Jesus prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But it was not possible for mankind to be saved any other way.

I believe most in my audience believes in the need for evangelism. People need to hear the bad news about our sinful condition, and the good news of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Now, let's consider the next truth, and that is:

II. YOU HAVE A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVANGELISM

Suppose your neighbor's house caught on fire. Someone was trapped on the 2nd floor. You have an extension ladder that you could bring over to help rescue your neighbor from burning to death. But imagine that you say, "I'll not get involved. I'll just call the professionals to come help. That's what they're paid to do." Would that be right? That's what Christians do all the time spiritually speaking.

Now Romans 10:13 gives a wonderful promise. There the Bible says, "For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." If you have heard today the bad news about your sinful condition, and if you have heard that your sin condemns you to an eternity separated from

God, then I have good news. If you believe in Jesus who died for your sin, and if you call upon the name of the Lord in prayer, then you will be saved.

But then Paul asks a series of questions beginning in v.14, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” Do you realize that at least half of our world population has not heard the gospel? Some of that number have heard of Jesus, but they have not heard the gospel. For example, Islam says Jesus was a prophet, but they deny He died on the cross for our sins. There is not gospel in that message. I dare say that even in our area, there are many who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel. How shall they believe in Jesus if they have never heard the gospel? I believe there are many children and young people in this community who rarely go to church. Shame on their parents! As a result, they have very little knowledge about Jesus Christ. How can they be saved unless someone tells them about Jesus, and God’s plan of salvation?

The next question is, “and how shall they hear...?” Paul answers his question in a way that we think of first: “how shall they hear without a preacher?” Jesus was a preacher. The apostles were preachers. Even some of the original 7 deacons were preachers. Preaching is still one of the primary ways that God saves souls. How many of you accepted Christ primarily through the ministry of a preacher? Let’s see your hands.

Now let’s apply that truth. I wonder if God is calling anyone here today to surrender to preach the gospel? Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of them that ...bring glad tidings of good things!” The feet are referred to because the feet carry the messenger of good news. If you do not preach, then you need to support the ministries of those who are. How? By inviting the unchurched and unbelievers to hear your preacher! You should also pray for preachers. Pray that God’s anointing will be upon us. You should give to support preachers and missionaries.

But I want you to know that all Christians have a mission to unbelievers to fulfill. The Great Commission to make disciples of all nations did not end with the death of the last apostle. It wasn’t even spoken exclusively to the apostles. It was spoken to all of the disciples gathered there. When He gave the Great Commission He promised, “...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Until Jesus comes again, the commission is still valid, and He promises to be with us to help fulfill it.

The early church certainly didn’t believe the command to share the good news only applied to the apostles and preachers. Look over at Acts 8:4, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” Actually, the word translated “preaching the word” simply means “sharing the good news” (*euaggelizo*). Now who went everywhere sharing the good news? Look back at v.1, “At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” The apostles were not among those described in v.4! God puts the future of the world in our hands. So I want to challenge you to accept your mission in life, to influence unbelievers to become Christians.

As long as this mission is left in the hands of a few, we will not fulfill it. I’m sorry to say that we are not doing very well in fulfilling our mission. Last year we baptized 9. We have over 275 active members, and yet we only baptized 9. That means it takes about 30 active member to win one soul to Christ. The ratio ought to be closer to 1 baptism for every 1 active member. Don’t you think you can set of goal of influencing at least 1 person to become a Christian this coming year?

And every once in a while I hear somebody say to me, “Pastor Steve, isn't our church big enough?” In some ways, yes. We are big enough to have a nice building. We are big enough to have a several paid staff members. We are big enough to offer a youth program, AWANA program, and several other nice programs. But we don't grow for our benefit. We grow because everybody needs Jesus, because people need the Lord. See, the wrong question is, “How big should we get?” The right question is, “Should anybody be left out?” The answer is no! The church that doesn't want to grow and reach out is basically saying to the world, “You can go to hell.” That's what they are saying. You don't want to say that, do you?

Now if you accept you personal responsibility to win others to Christ, then I have some good news for you, which is my third point:

III. GOD WILL ENABLE YOU TO WIN UNBELIEVERS

Being a witness for Jesus Christ is a challenging and difficult task. We come up with all kinds of excuses not to do it. One is, “I can't do it.” But God does not leave you alone in this task. He will enable you. He will help you if you will just make yourself available. How will He help you win unbelievers to Christ? First:

A. There Is Power in the Holy Spirit – In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” If you will supply the will to obey, God will supply the power to witness through the Holy Spirit. This is also brought out in John 20:21 Jesus said, “*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*” Jesus was sent from heaven on a mission to save the lost. We also are saved for the very purpose of continuing that mission to save the lost. Then notice what happened in the next verse, “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” The Holy Spirit will help you to witness of your faith, and He will work on the person you are speaking to. Listen, whatever God calls you to do, He will enable you to do if you will only trust Him.

I know how it is [tell personal struggle with witnessing]. But when I make up my mind that I am going to witness to some, I just trust God's Holy Spirit to help me, and He does!

Not only is there power in the Holy Spirit, but God gives you another resource for winning people to faith in Christ:

B. There is Power in the Gospel – Paul said in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes....” Simply inviting people to church will often have little results, for there is no gospel in an invitation to attend church. Some are just waiting for an invitation, but others resist going to church. But if you can also share the Word of God with someone, then you will find that it is powerful to change lives. The Word of God convicts people of sin. Heb. 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, ...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God is likened unto a seed that can be planted in a heart, and bring forth new life. If you can only learn a few verses of Scripture, you can become a soul winner. Or use a marked New Testament, and read some Scripture to someone. Or share a gospel tract with someone. I challenge you to believe in the power of the Word of God, and share it some way, some how.

C. There is Power in Training – Jesus spent 3 years training His disciples to become His witnesses. If you accept your mission to win others to Christ, then you will be more effective if you receive some witness training. I shared last week that God has given evangelists and pastors “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry...” (Eph. 4:12). Out in our Mission Fair you will have opportunity to sign up for witness training.

But you know what? Even without training you can at least start being a witness by sharing your testimony. That's why we call it witnessing. You simply testify to what God has done in your life. Tell of the change in your life. Tell of the peace and forgiveness you have found in Christ. Tell of the love you have found in fellow believers. If they can see a change in your life, then they will want to know more. That's a good time to invite them to church. They are more likely to come after they have heard a good testimony. Or invite them to a Bible study. Or invite them to read the Bible or a Christian book. You can give tapes, you can e-mail people. You can do it!

IV. UNDERSTAND WHERE YOUR MISSION FIELD IS

Well, Acts 1:8 says, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* So based on this verse, I want you to understand where your mission field is. First:

A. You Must Share With Those in Your World - Now, when Jesus told this to his followers, do you know where they were? They were in Jerusalem. That's the starting point. He is saying, first, I want you to start where you are. I want you to start with the people closest to you, right there in your own city, your own community. There's a guy who Jesus healed. And after Jesus healed him, he wanted to travel with Jesus and Jesus said, "No, I don't want you to do that." In Luke 8:39, He said this, *"Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you."* Then we read, *"And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him."* Notice that Jesus said, *"Return to your own house."* Do you know where your mission starts? Right at home, starts in your own neighborhood, in your own community. In fact, if you are not doing missions & evangelism here, then you have little right for God's people to send you somewhere else. God wants you to go to your friends, your family, your coworkers, your neighbors, anybody who crosses your path, the person who delivers the paper, helps you with gas or a clerk somewhere. God says, "I want you to share the Good News with the people first in your Jerusalem, with the people in your home."

So you were made for a mission. That is the fifth purpose of your life. That means you must share with those in your world. But that's not enough.

B. You Must Reach Beyond Your World - Then He says I want you to go to Judea. Judea is about the size of most states. So it would almost be comparable to reaching Virginia. Then He says we are to carry the good news to Samaria. Samaritans were close by, but they were also different culturally and different racially. So He said, "I want you to go to people nearby, but they are different from you." Love demands I move beyond my comfort zone to people with different backgrounds, different education, different language, and different economics. You see, our mission has such eternal consequences, heaven and hell, that we must be willing to risk anything to get the message out. If I had the cure for AIDS or cancer, it would be criminal to

keep it a secret. But I have something even more important than that, the way to an abundant life now, as well as eternal life. It has been given. Somebody cared enough to tell me, I've got to be caring enough to tell others.

Now what is the biblical strategy for reaching out to people who are different? In I Cor. 9:22 Paul said, *"to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* In that same context he said he became a Jew to the Jews, and as a Gentile to the Gentiles. Christians are called to build bridges, not walls, to people who are different. So don't just hang out with people like you. God expects us to make the first move. In fact, over and over again God says "Go." You can't spell "God" without "go." You can't spell "Good News" without "go." You can't spell "gospel" without "go." You have to go!

I must dare to reach beyond my own little world. You know, when you read the Bible and you read about Jesus, you read that Jesus always rooted for the underdog that people in that society wanted to ignore; the powerless, the poor, the left behind, the imprisoned, the orphaned, the widowed, the aged, the mentally ill, the social outcasts, sick, the lepers. If Jesus were alive today, do you know who He would be hanging out with? He would be reaching out to those who have needs. He would be caring for those that everybody else wants to turn their back on.

This is a real challenge. We do not have many ministries in our church that are reaching out to people who are different from 80-90% of our members. Our AWANA ministry reaches some kids that are disadvantaged, who do not come from good Christian homes. We financially support many ministries that reach out to those who are different and poor. Your World Hunger offering does that. I hope you have already given to that wonderful mission opportunity. But in terms of direct ministry, we are not doing much to build bridges to those who are economically, socially, or racially different. We need to do better at intentionally reaching out to those who are overlooked by other people.

One day we're going to stand before God and He's going to do an audit of our lives, and He's going to judge if we really learned to love or if it was just all talk. Did we ever really do anything that showed love or did we just say we loved? The Bible says one day Jesus is going to separate people into two groups: sheep and goats. And He's going to say to one group, as we see in Matthew 25. *"I was hungry, and you fed Me. I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me into your home. I was naked, and you gave Me clothing. I was sick and you cared for Me. I was in prison and you visited Me."*

Christianity is all about healing broken, messed up lives. The whole business of Christianity is healing hurts and helping people. That is love. Now, I'm not going to kid you, if you get involved in your mission in the world, it is going to cost you. It is going to break you out of self-centeredness and comfortable things, and it is going to cost you time and energy and effort and money and maybe even your privacy sometimes; but God has promised eternal rewards. In Mt. 19:29 Jesus said, *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."* That's a big increase over your investment. You're not going to get those rates anywhere in the world! God says, "Whatever you do for me is not in vain." It is not enough to just share with those in my world; it is not even enough to reach beyond my world, to dare to reach beyond it. If I am going to be like Jesus Christ

C. Care About the Whole World - Then He says, "I want you to go to the ends of the earth. I want you to go reach everybody else." We have to care because God cares about the

whole world. This is going to take you to a new level of spiritual maturity. In Mark 16:15 Jesus said to His followers, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*” If you're a Christian, Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I'll make you a fisher of men.” If you're not fishing, you're not following. He says to His followers, go everywhere, because everybody deserves to hear the Good News.

God is building a family of people who are going to spend eternity with Him. And that, my friends, is the whole point of history. And based on the Great Commission we know that God wants family members from every nation. And one day all believers are going to be gathered together in heaven. This is not Mission Impossible. This is Mission Inevitable. It is going to happen. And it has been God's plan all along.

Here's the amazing part: God has chosen us to complete the mission. The mission that Jesus Christ started when He came to earth, He says, “I want you guys to finish it.” Now, listen, that used to be impossible. When He said it to His disciples, they didn't even have the ships to get across to other continents. In those days, they had two means of transportation, walk or donkey, maybe a camel. That was it. Now, today, we have ships, and planes and trains and automobiles and buses; and with the internet, the world has even gotten smaller. You can communicate to all the world from your home, from your den, from your bedroom. You can sit in your pajamas and communicate around the world now. It has never been easier to fulfill your mission. You can now do “e-vangelism.” All right? The world just got a whole lot smaller. You know what? Even in the most remote villages of the world, they may not have plumbing, but they got e-mail. A missionary once said, “We get electricity two hours a day; but when we get that two hours, we all turn on our laptops.” So you can literally go around the world from your home now. It has never been easier to care about the whole world.

From our own church we have sent members to Mexico, Africa, Romania, France, Bangladesh, and a few other countries. Garret Brink will be going to China soon. Will you volunteer to go? Will you give to our Lottie Moon mission offering, so others can go?

Conclusion: Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you? When you get to heaven, is anybody going to say thank you for telling me the Good News? You knew it and you didn't keep it a secret. You passed it on.

As we come to the close of 40 days, this next week, after our celebration, my prayer is that you will fulfill God's purposes for your life. What is more important than that: doing what God put you on earth to do? Here's the test to know if you have completed your mission or not. Are you still alive? If you're still alive, your mission is not completed. So as we close, you've got four possible responses. You can say like Moses, “Who me?” Or you can say like Jonah, “Not me.” Or you can say it like Habakkuk, “Why me?” Or you can say like Isaiah, “Send me.” Will you pray, “God use me.” I dare you to say it. Do you have enough courage to say, “God use my life”? Watch what happens! Little becomes much when you put it in the Master's hand.

Sources: Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982); Rick Warren's sermon, “Made For A Mission,” Nov. 2-3, 2002.