

Reaching the Nations for Christ

by John Hwang

Our confidence in going forth to the nations is rooted in God's mission and the church's mandate to make disciples of all nations.

Duration: 54:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Thessalonians 2:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:14, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the importance of a strong introduction in preaching. However, he admits that he will ignore this rule for the sake of delivering a meaningful message. He then turns to the book of 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and highlights practical lessons from the missionary example of the Apostle Paul. The speaker emphasizes the call to reach the nations for Christ and quotes Romans 10:14-15 to emphasize the importance of verbal preaching in sharing the gospel. He also mentions the significance of lifestyle evangelism, but emphasizes that speaking the gospel is essential.

Transcript

All right, well, good to see you again. I was gone for a bit, but I made my way back down today. Nice to be back with you.

And John Wayne's gonna come tonight, and he's gonna share with us, and I just have so many great memories of John, and I don't wanna embarrass him, but I remember him when he was about 13 years old, sitting at a chapel service, a Bible study I was giving, and I remember him just really, you know, wanting to serve the Lord, committing his life to the Lord. I remember him all through those years of junior high and high school, and then as, I think he was maybe 18 years old, being in Europe with him, and just seeing him there, serving the Lord, and then we kinda, you know, went in different directions, and he went up north, and I went south, and then to England, and then he went to Brazil, and spent 10 years in Brazil, pioneering churches there, and met his beautiful wife, and his family was developed, and just recently, the Lord has brought him back up here through some circumstances, and he's with us now on our staff, he's doing the Extension Bible College campus at Costa Mesa, and we're just so blessed to have him back, and we're excited to hear what God's put on his heart tonight, so let's welcome John Wayne. Thank you for coming tonight.

Well, first things first, I just wanna say how thankful I am for each and every one of you. How thankful I am to know that you're out there somewhere, whether locally or on the foreign mission field, and you're serving King Jesus, and you're being obedient to the call of Christ, so that's the first thing. The second thing is tonight I want us to all turn to the book of 1st Thessalonians, chapter 2. 1st Thessalonians, chapter 2. Now in this thing called homiletics, homiletics is the study of preaching.

We are told to work hard in our introductions because what teachers tell us is that during your first 15 minutes that people are going to decide if they're going to track with you for the rest of the sermon or not. I'm going to completely ignore that rule tonight. You know, as I was seeking God about what to share at this missions conference, I really wanted to not just stand up here and regurgitate a book report.

I've been guilty of that, where you just open up your Bible and you read a commentary and you just regurgitate a book report. That was the one thing I did not want to do tonight. And so I spent days, which turned into weeks, and just really seeking God in prayer, Lord, what is your heart for these missionaries that are going to be here at this conference? And during this time, I really believe that the Spirit of God directed me back toward a very familiar passage that not only am I familiar with, but I know that we're all familiar with it, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. And in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, Paul the Apostle is looking back into history.

He's rewinding his memories and he's thinking about the time that he and his missionary team had landed there in Thessalonica and a church was planted. And there in the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians, guys, there are practical lessons for us to learn here from the missionary example of, I think, that a guy that we all regard as our hero, the Apostle Paul, that missionary statesman and pioneer church planter, there are practical things that we can learn from from his life, primarily about our call, reaching the nations for Christ, reaching the nations for Christ. So let's pray and then we'll get into it tonight.

Father, tonight, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to stand here with your servants. And so, Lord, this evening, we pray that you would pour out your spirit on each one of us. I pray, Lord, that you would fill me with the spirit to be able to articulate what's on your mind and heart.

And Lord, I pray that you would fill each person sitting with your spirit so that they would have ears to hear what the spirit would say to them, whether it comes in the form of instruction or exhortation or correction. Lord, and however you're going to take this Logos word in 1 Thessalonians 2 and minister to us the rhema word personally, practically, I pray that every one of us would leave tonight knowing that we know that we've heard the voice of God. And so fill this place with your spirit.

And Lord, in the end, we just want people to leave with Jesus. In the end, we want people to walk away having exalted Christ. And we pray these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Looking at 1 Thessalonians, chapter two, beginning in verse one, we start with this point for us as missionaries. We have a confidence, our confidence in going forth to the nations.

Listen to what Paul says here in the first verse. He says, For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. It was not in vain.

And guys, Paul landed in Europe and Paul had arrived in Thessalonica in the year 50 A.D. Now, for Paul, this Jewish man born in Tarsus and trained in Jerusalem, guys, Thessalonica was a foreign city in a foreign land. It was in Macedonia. This city, Thessalonica, was populated with Jews and Gentiles.

And guys, there were a whole lot of pagan idols. And as Paul is rewinding his memories back to that moment in 50 A.D., this is what he says in chapter two, verse one. He says that his coming to them was not in vain.

It was not in vain. The NIV puts it as our visit to you was not without results. The New Living Translation says our visit to you was not a failure.

The message says our visit to you was no waste of time. Guys, in rewinding their memories, both Paul and the Thessalonians did not view Paul's missionary work among them as vain. For Paul, he glorified God.

He made Christ known among the Thessalonians and he had harvested a crop of redeemed souls among them. For the Thessalonians, lots of them had come to Christ for salvation. I want you to think about this.

When all of God's redeemed people from every tribe, every tongue, every people, every nation are gathered around God's throne to shout God's praise, guys, a group of Thessalonians are going to be there. A group of Thessalonians are going to be there. Guys, Paul's mission in Thessalonica was not in vain.

Here's the application, guys. This is our confidence in going forth to the nations. This is our confidence in going forth to the nations.

Wherever you've landed geographically, every one of us can say our coming to you was not in vain. Guys, we need to keep in mind that among the nations, God is on mission. He's on mission claiming and gathering a people to himself from Pentecost to rapture.

And God is going to use the church to do this. What a privilege that is. God is on mission.

He's claiming and gathering a people among the nations to himself and from Pentecost to rapture. God is going to use the church to do this. And God has entrusted the church with this mandate.

You guys know it. In Mark, chapter 16, verse 15, Jesus said, Go, go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. In Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20, Jesus said, Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all things that I've commanded you.

And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. And guys, our right response is to go. Guys, we are on the go.

Every one of us, we are on the go in our towns, in our in our cities, we are on the go in our counties and in our states, we are on the go to the nations of the world. And Christ, God incarnate, commissioned the church to preach the gospel to the whole world and to make disciples of all nations. And here's the here is the confidence that we have.

God is on mission and guys, gals, please do not miss this. God will succeed in his mission. God will succeed in his mission.

This fact is seen in heaven. As John is given the privilege to see into the future at the throne of God, Revelation, chapter five, verses nine and 10, says that there is this gathering around the throne of God and the praise that is rising to God has these lyrics included. By your blood, you ransom people for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priest to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

The missiologist Bruce Ashford wrote this, quote. The church's task in every generation is to proclaim the gospel to her generation. This progress of the gospel to the ends of the earth may be hindered temporarily, but there can be no doubt about its final triumph.

In Revelation five, our Lord gives John a breathtaking vision in this vision, all of heaven burst forth into praise among those worshiping John, sees men and women from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. This is the vision that drives us, that our Lord will be worshiped from all corners of the globe. He is worthy of such worship.

Our lives should be lived in such a way as to contribute to this triumphant march of God as he draws unto himself worshipers from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. And that is what you and I are a part of, guys, the certainty. The certainty.

Of Revelation, chapter five, verses nine and 10 has and continues to inspire and compel missionaries to go forth to the nations of the world. Check this out. The Moravians, the Moravian missionaries, God used the Moravians to a certain degree for the conversion of John Wesley.

The Moravians had learned that the secret of loving the souls of men was found in loving the savior of men. On October 8th, 1732, a Dutch ship left the Copenhagen harbor bound for the Danish West Indies. On board were the two first Moravian missionaries, John Leonard Dober, a potter, and David Nishman, a carpenter.

Both were skilled speakers, listen, and ready to sell themselves into slavery. To reach the slaves of the West Indies. I mean, think about that, these guys got on a boat to go to the West Indies to sell themselves into slavery for the rest of their lives, to reach the slaves.

As the ship slipped away, they lifted up a cry that would one day become the rallying call for all Moravian missionaries. This is what they said. May the lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering.

The Moravians passion for souls was surpassed only by their passion for the lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Is Jesus that big? Is Jesus that worth it, that they would sell themselves into slavery for the rest of their lives because they believed, may the lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering? Guys, our going forth to the nations is not in vain. And guys, these are encouraging words for missionaries, especially when we find ourselves tired, discouraged, and thinking, what's the point? This is all a mistake and a waste of time.

It is time to quit. But here's the fact of the matter, guys, gals, leaving your native homeland in obedience to God's call to move to a distant foreign land for the sake of making King Jesus known among the people of that land is never in vain. We may or may not see the fruit of the labors in this life, but we will see it and we will hear it at God's throne.

Consider Adeniram Judson. He was born on August 9th, 1788, and went to heaven on April 12th, 1850 at the age of 61. In the year 1808 at age 20, Adeniram converted to Christ and felt God's call to be a missionary.

At age 25, on February 5th, 1812, Adeniram married his sweetheart, Anne Hazeltine. Two weeks later, on February 19th, 1812, Adeniram and Anne left America on a ship and landed in Calcutta, India on June 17th, 1812. Almost one year later, Adeniram and Anne moved to Burma on July 13th, 1812.

Now, one biographer wrote this about Adeniram Judson in Burma, quote, he went to Burma where he labored for nearly 40 years. He translated the whole Bible into Burmese, spent 21 months in a brutal prison, and buried two wives as Anne died and then he remarried and she died. And he buried more than five children.

Thinking about Adeniram Judson in Burma, think about this, Adeniram baptized his first convert in June of 1819. That was almost seven years after he landed in Burma. By 1822, 10 years after arriving in Burma, he could count 18 converts.

That's 10 years in Burma, 18 converts. By the time of his death, almost 40 years later, in 1850, he saw 7,000 converts baptized and 63 churches started by 163 missionaries in Burma. So during those 40 years, God began to raise up other people to come alongside of Adeniram Judson and people started getting converted and churches were planted.

Now, listen, today, today in Burma, over 163 years after Judson's death, there are over 600,000 members of the Burma Baptist Convention worshiping King Jesus in 3,700 churches. The book, World Christian Encyclopedia by David Barrett states, quote, the largest Christian force in Burma is the Burma Baptist Convention, which owes its origin to the pioneering activity of the American Baptist missionary, Adeniram Judson. Again, when all of God's redeemed people from every tribe, from every tongue, from every people, from every nation are gathered around God's throne to shout out God's praise, guys, do you realize thousands from Burma are going to be there? Guys, Adeniram Judson's going to Burma was not in vain.

Now, here's the confidence that encourages us to go out and press on. Number one, guys, you need to remember, as you're out there in the trenches, that our Messiah will not fail. Our Messiah will not fail.

In John 10, 16, Jesus said, I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I listen, listen to the imperatives. I must bring them also.

He's talking about the Gentiles. The other sheep are Gentiles, the nations that we're serving in. He says, I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also. And they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock and one shepherd.

There is no uncertainty in those words, guys. Our Messiah will succeed. Peter Cameron Scott, born 1867, went to heaven in 1896.

He embraced those words of Jesus. He was a Scottish-American who had founded the African Inland Mission. He had twice tried to serve in Africa, but had to come home both times with malaria.

The third attempt was especially joyful because he was joined by his brother, John. But that joy soon evaporated because John had fallen victim to malaria and he had died. Scott buried his brother all by himself.

And there, as he buried his brother at the grave, Scott rededicated himself to preach the gospel. But again, his health broke and he had to return to England utterly discouraged. While he was in London, something wonderful happened.

In the book, *From Jerusalem to Erangeia* by Ruth Tucker, she tells the story. She tells us, quote, he needed a fresh source of inspiration and he found it at a tomb in Westminster Abbey that held the remains of a man who had inspired so many others in their missionary service to Africa. The spirit of David Livingstone seemed to be prodding Scott onward as he knelt reverently and read the inscription, quote, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring." He would return to Africa and lay down his life, if need be, for the cause for which this great man had lived and died.

Guys, our Messiah will not fail. Guys, our message will not fail. Our message will not fail.

God said it, Isaiah 55 verses 10 and 11, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it spring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Jesus said in Matthew 24, 35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but guys, my words will not pass away."

Guys, do you understand? The Bible, the words of God are going to outlive kingdoms and nations. It is going to outlive pharaohs and Caesars and presidents and dictators and prime ministers, dignitaries, diplomats. It's going to outlive the nations.

Our message will not fail. And guys, our mission will not fail. In Matthew 24, 14, Jesus said this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.

Again in Revelation 5, 9 and 10, "By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth." Guys, again, our going forth to the nations is not in vain. So whatever your challenges are, whatever your obstacles are, whatever your difficulties are, you look at that country that God has turned your face toward and whatever the topography of it is, whatever the culture of it is, whatever the geographical distinctions of that country is, you stand there on the border and you look into that land and you look into the faces of those people and you say by faith, our coming to you is not in vain.

Guys, our labors for Christ among the nations is not in vain. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, 58, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." So that's number one, our confidence in going forth to the nations.

Number two, our boldness in proclaiming the gospel to the nations. Our boldness in proclaiming the gospel to the nations. In 1 Thessalonians 2, 2 Paul writes, "but even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict."

Guys, Paul preached the gospel of God to the nations. This was his mission. In Acts 20, verse 24, Paul defined his ministry like this, "to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

And nothing would deter him from this mission. Guys, his past sufferings in Philippi did not stop him. And you guys know the story in Acts 16.

Guys, you understand, Acts 17 follows the story of Acts 16. After he had been beaten and imprisoned. And guys, Acts 16 tells us he was beaten with rods.

In Acts 17, he goes to Thessalonica and even in the face of that kind of trauma, he boldly proclaimed the gospel and even there in Thessalonica, the present conflict did not stop him from preaching. But I want you to observe a word. I grew up as one of those nerds that's very interested in words.

I kept one of those vocabulary calendars on my desk to try to learn a new word every day. And I believe especially when it comes to the Bible, words matter. Every word is inspiring.

I want you to observe the word speak. Speak. Guys, on mission, Paul opened his mouth and he spoke the gospel of God.

He verbalized it to others. Paul understood Christ's mandate to preach the gospel to mean this. Use words to communicate, to articulate and to proclaim the gospel of God.

And Paul was so convinced of this that even during his imprisonment, when politically powers were trying to shut him up, he sends a letter, a petition to the Christians in Ephesus and in Ephesians chapter 6 verses 18 through 20, he says, praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, listen, and also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in charge that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. This is how Paul understood the mandate to preach. Guys, the gospel of God should be shared with other people using words.

God's words. Paul said in Romans 10, 14 and 15, how then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they or and how are they to believe in him in whom they have never what? Heard. And how are they to hear without someone preaching? What's implied is that this preaching is verbal, it's audible, it's articulated.

And how are they to preach unless they are set, as it is written, and how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news? Guys, our ideas of sharing the gospel with others must be something more than just word, less social or lifestyle evangelism. It must be spoken. It must be articulated using words or at least in written print.

Guys, we must speak the gospel. It's not just a deal with lifestyle evangelism. Our lifestyle should authenticate the truth and the power of our message.

Again, the application is this. We must preach the gospel. Why? Because the gospel of Christ produces saving faith in Christ.

Look, I appreciate the role of drama and I appreciate the role of music. I appreciate the role of theater. I think that all of those things are a great, attractive draw for people.

But guys, if that's where it ended, we failed in our mission. Because it's the gospel of Christ and only the gospel of Christ that produces saving faith in Christ. Paul said in Romans 10, 17, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

The context here is what we just read. How are they going to believe if they don't hear? The context is salvation. 1 Peter 1, 23 says, You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable

through the living and abiding word of God.

Guys, the gospel of Christ is humanity's greatest need. And we must be dedicated to proclaiming it. 2 Timothy 4, 1 and 2. I cannot think of a more urgent plea than this.

As Paul said, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is the judge, the living and the dead, and by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, rebuke, reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching. And guys, we must not allow anything to deter us away from it. I know you know this, but sometimes we just need to be reminded of it.

Guys, there is no better alternative or substitute for bringing people to God and for bringing God's salvation to people than the preaching of the gospel. The message that saves people is the gospel of Christ and the means of delivering the soul-saving message is preaching. 1 Corinthians 1, 18 and verse 21 Paul says, For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Listen, it pleased God. It made him happy, makes him happy. It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Guys, this is God's mandate. This is our mission to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. But we can't move on unless we visit another point in verse 2. I want you to see that Paul preached with boldness.

Paul preached with boldness. He said we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God. Guys, will you think about the scene here? Paul preached with boldness in a pagan city among idol worshippers and in the face of violent opposition.

Notice he tags on those words in much conflict. And when Paul uses those words, that's an understatement. And notice that the source of his boldness, he says, in our God.

What does it mean to be bold in our God? Number one, it's the assurance of the presence of God. Guys, the assurance of the presence of God produces this kind of boldness. Do you guys remember what Jesus said in the Great Commission? In Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20, Jesus promised us all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

You know what that means? There is no one bigger and better than King Jesus and there is no one more powerful than King Jesus. He has all the resources that we need. And with all of that, he says, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Guys, Christ's presence emboldens us to proclaim the gospel of God to a hostile world. When Paul needed this encouragement the most, Jesus gave it in Acts 18, 9. It says, the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent. And here's the reason for I am with you.

Like King David, Paul strengthened himself in the Lord, his God. The problem is, is when we allow our hearts to drift from King Jesus and we find ourselves like Jacob saying, the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. Guys, God is with you.

He's with you. He's with you in every place all the time. And when you know this, this fact emboldens us to preach the gospel of God.

But what does it mean to be bold in our God? Not only do we think about the presence of God, but we also think about our confidence in the gospel of God. It produces this kind of boldness. Paul wrote in Romans 1, 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Listen, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Notice what Paul says. Words matter.

He doesn't say that the gospel of God is assisted by the power of God. He doesn't say that the gospel of God helps along God's power of salvation. He says that the gospel of God is the power of God for salvation.

When you open your mouth and you share the gospel. You are unleashing God's power in that individual's life. And it is big enough power to save souls.

That's why Paul says I'm not ashamed. People that don't have that kind of understanding of the gospel, they view the gospel as a water pistol going into war. Well, how big is your gun? Well, I've got a water pistol.

Yes, I am deeply embarrassed. But Paul didn't view the gospel that way. He saw his enemy all armed with water pistols, and he's coming in with a bazooka.

It emboldens us. And thirdly, the spirit of God produced this boldness in us. The spirit of God produces this boldness in us.

Guys, Paul's boldness displayed the presence and power of God's spirit. In fact, we can see that it's God's spirit that directed Paul in his preaching, especially when you're in much conflict. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10 verses 19 and 20, when they deliver you over, we're talking about suffering followers of Jesus.

When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. Isn't that interesting? Even in times of the greatest and darkest of circumstances, and here it's in the context of persecution, imprisonment, and impending death, even then Jesus says, don't shut up. And then he says, for it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Well, how can you do that? Well, it's God's spirit. It's God's spirit that empowered Paul in his preaching. Again, in 1 Thessalonians 1.5, he says, our gospel came to you, and here's something interesting, he says, not only in word, so there's something else going on besides mere verbiage, he says, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction.

Guys, this is the direct result of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and I think for some of us, if not for a lot of us, we need to revisit the subject of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In regeneration, God's spirit, he baptized us into Christ Jesus, but in the baptism with the Holy Spirit, it's Jesus who baptizes us with God's spirit. In regeneration, God's spirit comes inside of us.

In the baptism with the Holy Spirit, God's spirit comes upon us. And Jesus promised his disciples this, in Acts 1.8, he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Guys, the baptism with the spirit, Acts 1.8, it's connected with Matthew 28, the Great Commission, Mark 16.

This promise teaches us that God supplies us with this power to be effective witnesses for Christ in this world. Guys, the power that Jesus spoke of there in Acts 1.8 is God's supernatural and accomplishing power. And it's this power that empowers us to be Christ's effective witnesses in the world, those who testify of King Jesus, of all that he is and all that he's done.

And guys, people who are empowered with God's spirit, they're going to have both a local and global impact for Christ. As Jesus said, you will be. There's no possibilities there, it's absolutes.

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Guys, if we want to be bold in God, we need to be a people that are not seeking to continue in our missionary endeavors through human means. If we want to effectively reach our nations for Christ, we have to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, if you haven't been tonight, or filled with the spirit again, and then you can pack up your bags and go back.

In fact, this is demonstrated in Acts 4.29-31 when it says, in this prayer meeting, Lord, look upon the threats. These guys, guys, these guys are preaching in the context of opposition and persecution, and they're praying, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness. And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together were shaken, listen, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

And continue to speak the word of God with boldness. What would it be like, guys, gals, if tonight, that we would take the baptism with the Holy Spirit seriously, and like the early church did, before we walk out of this place, we gather with one voice, with a united heart, and we pray again, Lord, give us your boldness, no matter what our social or cultural or geographical context may be, give us the boldness, the power of the Holy Spirit to go back and to preach boldly. Because the reality is, guys, some of us just need revival.

We do. I'll tell you, one of the most dangerous places to be is when your mission and your ministry becomes the primary point for your identity. And the powerlessness of your ministry is because your mission and your ministry is all about you.

And what you have launched out in the nations to do to exalt Christ because of time and discouragement, or you see people around you that seem to have more visible success, or you come to missions conferences and you hear all these people talk about the great things that God is doing, all of a sudden, because your identity is now in your mission and in your ministry, you're no longer moving in the power of the Spirit. You're no longer interested in the Great Commission. Now everything is about you propping up that one thing because if that one thing fails, then you lose your identity.

And when you have gotten to that point, you are committing the sin of idolatry. And when a good thing becomes a God thing, it becomes a bad thing. And there are some people, the only reason why you're in the mission field isn't because of the call of God, it's because you became noticed and you became a somebody in your local church setting the moment you packed up your bags and you left.

And there's others of you that you know God is calling you home, but you don't want to face the embarrassment, you don't want to face what you think are criticisms by people saying, oh, you're another statistic of failure. Guys, I'll tell you, more than ever, the 10 years that I spent in Brazil, I got to tell you,

what God had worked into my heart was the reality that I was an idol worshiper. My preaching was my idol.

My position was my idol because I'm going to hold on to this thing and if you ever, ever, ever come near this thing that at any moment I'm going to have to release it, my kingdom of self would crumble. And so as long as the praise was coming saying, thank you, pastor, good pastor, awesome pastor, eloquent pastor, my idol was propped up until I understood the humility of John the Baptist when he told his followers, haven't you guys been listening to anything I've been saying and whatever I have, it's because I received it from heaven. And at any moment, God wants to remove it from my life.

I can let go of it. No wonder the aged Apostle John would say, little children, keep yourselves from idols. I mean, that is how he abruptly ends his first epistle.

Those are his final words in 1 John and you think that seems out of place and yet this is the one sin that is most sinister and most dangerous in our lives in ministry. No wonder your ministry is so powerless. No wonder your ministry is so fruitless and you got to understand and I've told people this because I have a tendency to crank up the volume when I speak and generally when I crank up the volume loud, it's because I'm preaching to me.

We need to revisit the baptism with the Holy Spirit. When we come back to those simple truths is that we understand what Jesus, King Jesus said, for without me you can do nothing. I'll tell you what, one of the things that King Jesus told me before I left for Brazil is I was thinking about and dreaming about all the fruit that was going to come from my preaching, all the fruit that was going to come from my counseling, all the fruit that was going to come from me being a church planner and Jesus reminded me of this one thing.

There's only one thing that he has promised and guaranteed fruit from and that's abiding in Jesus. Oh, I can do that. So that means if I go to Brazil and I spend those years there just abiding in Jesus, he guarantees my life will be fruitful.

Well, what about my preaching? What about my counseling? What about my church planning? Guys, all of that is the overflow of an abiding relationship but if you're thinking through your preaching, through your counseling, through your church planning that that is going to be how you are going to convince yourself that you're abiding in Jesus. Guys, you are a branch and I'll tell you what, a branch is not the life source of fruit bearing. Think about a branch on a vine.

The only purpose for the branch is to show off the fruit, to show off, to brag about what the vine can do. You cut that branch off, that branch will lay there and there'll be no fruit there because the branch is not the life source. Guys, we are missionaries in our nations and we are branches.

We are not the vine. And in our nations, as we go back to those simple realities that we are abiding in Jesus as branches, the life source, Christ, that is when fruit is seen but if you try to manufacture that, well, congratulations, you are a good producer, manufacturer of wax fruit. It may look like the real thing but when people try to bite into it, they're seriously disappointed.

We are branches, we are not the vine and if you want your life to be fruitful, it's the abiding, abiding, abiding relationship with Jesus. So what should be more interested in your thoughts is not your sermon prep, it should be your devotional time with King Jesus. What is more important to you is not you counseling others, it's your vertical prayer relationship with King Jesus.

What is more important to you than church planning or social work, it is you and Jesus. And guys, for us to be effective witnesses in the world, we need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If we want to reach the nations of Christ, it's not going to be you or as I say you or me, myself and I, the Trinity of stupidity.

It's going to take you nowhere unless you embrace the crash and burn theology. Vance Havner, and I'm wrapping it up here, guys. Vance Havner, born 1901, went to heaven in 1986.

He said, we are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God. Guys, can we go back to those simple truths? God's work, it's not your work. God's work will be done in God's power, in God's way.

And what is God's way? This is our banner. This is what we march into the nations with. It's just one of our banners.

Zechariah 4.6 Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts. Guys, we need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Question, are you a bold witness for Christ? Now, I know that there is a diversity of personalities here and I'm not talking about the person who is very outgoing, he's an extrovert.

Obviously, that person must be a person baptized with the Spirit. Guys, I am through and through an introvert. I am very melancholy.

I am the guy that in a public social gathering you will not find me in a crowded group of people. I am the guy that hangs out by the Dorito Bowl. And yet, yet, how can a guy whose tongue shakes be so used by God to testify of his gospel and people walk away saying, it's all about Jesus.

Because when people walk away and they're saying it's all about you, it's all about... And hear me on this, for even some of us, Calvary Chapel has become an idol. We're more interested in spreading the fame of Calvary Chapel and Chuck Smith than we are about Jesus. We're more interested in marching into our nations with the symbol of the dove than we are of the cross of Christ.

And you get into these conversations and you're asking each other, so what's ministry like? And it's all about, well, we're planting Calvary Chapels here and Calvary Chapel this and Calvary Chapel that. And in the entire conversation, there's no mention of the name Jesus. And for some of us, it's just even an issue of repenting over Calvary Chapel.

And guys, hear my heart. I love Calvary. I'm thankful for how God used Calvary Chapel in my life.

But I am not going to die for the name of Calvary Chapel. If I'm going to have to die for something, I'm going to die for the name of King Jesus. Are you a bold witness for Christ? Are you proclaiming Christ both verbally and visibly in the power of God's spirit? Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? Guys, God wants to baptize us tonight.

He wants to fill us with his spirit every day. And here's the deal, guys. Ask him to do it for you tonight.

Receive it by faith and then be on the go.

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