

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, May 7 2017

The Great Commission

Recently a dear brother of ours asked a question about authority – as a church, what authority do we have? It’s a very good question, and deserves a thorough, scriptural answer; the last place we want to find ourselves is usurping authority that does not belong to us! While that question had a particular context, I would like to talk to you today about the overarching question: what authority do we have to operate, and how are we to be employed, as Christians who have been called out and assembled together. What authority do we have? We don’t have to cobble scriptures together to find this authority – we have a direct command from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ that grants that authority, and commissions the work of the assemblies of God until the second coming of Christ. That commission is reported in all 3 of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), and is commonly referred to as “The Great Commission”. Let us begin our analysis of this Great Commission, by considering the events surrounding it.

After our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, and conquered death in his resurrection, he spent 40 days instructing and comforting his apostles:

Acts 1:2-3 “2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:”

At the end of these 40 days, he ascended into heaven:

Luke 24:50-51 “50 ¶ And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”

The last event that the scriptures describe prior to our Lord’s ascension takes place in Galilee:

- After the Lord’s Supper took place, he told the apostles that **“after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.” (Matthew 26:32).**
- After he was risen, he had been at, and around Jerusalem – now he bids the apostles to come to a mountain in Galilee – which is roughly 60 to 80 miles, depending upon which mountain it was; perhaps Mount Tabor, or the mountain near Capernaum **(Matthew 5:1).**

- He had done many miracles in Galilee, and had many disciples. He now showed himself there to those disciples - more than 500 of them gathered there with him, to be living witnesses to the risen Christ (**1Corinthians 15:6**).
- Matthew Henry offers some instructive thoughts on why the apostles should go on this very long journey to Galilee and then back to Jerusalem (Bethany) where Christ ascended: *“1. Because he appointed them to do so. Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed. Those who have met him in one ordinance, must attend him in another; those who have seen him at Jerusalem, must go to Galilee. 2. Because that was to be a public and general meeting. They had seen him themselves, and conversed with him in private, but that should not excuse their attendance in a solemn assembly, where many were to be gathered together to see him. Note: Our communion with God in secret must not supersede our attendance on public worship, as we have opportunity; for God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we.”*
 - We all have these experiences of leaving off worldly things, relationships, and ways of thinking and acting. Physically moving is one example, but it is certainly not the only one. These experiences are universal to the saints of God – they are difficult and contrary to our flesh, and are appointed personally for each of our frames, by our loving, longsuffering Father.

Having now been gathered to Galilee, and taken aside from the general gathering of 500+ disciples, the Lord delivers the Great Commission to the Apostles. These words are the final words of Christ recorded by any of the Gospel writers; these are the closing words of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Seeing that, it is clear that these are the words that Christ meant to leave as his parting instruction for the ages to come; he clearly said more words to the Apostles after this event, but **these** are the words that he left us.

Mark 16:14-20 “**14 ¶** **Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. 19 ¶ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”**

Luke 24:44-49 “**44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning**

me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

Matthew 28:16-20 “16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Some general thoughts before we dive into the details:

- Mark and Matthew both reference the doubts that the Apostles had.
 - Henry: *“These doubts were afterward removed, and their faith grew up to a full assurance, and it tended much to the honour of Christ, that the disciples doubted before they believed; so that they cannot be said to be credulous, and willing to be imposed upon; for they first questioned, and proved all things, and then held fast that which was true, and which they found to be so. Jesus came, and spoke unto them. Though there were those that doubted, yet, he did not therefore reject them; for he will not break the bruised reed. He did not stand at a distance, but came near, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as turned the wavering scale, and made their faith to triumph over their doubts. He came, and spoke familiarly to them, as one friend speaks to another, that they might be fully satisfied in the commission he was about to give them.”*
- All three writers recount the breadth of the instruction (All the world, every creature, all nations).
- Mark gives a lot of detail about the particular miraculous signs that would follow the apostles (and some of the disciples) that received the special gifts of the Holy Spirit, in order that the truth of their testimony of Christ – his word and his works - would be confirmed and accepted.
- Luke is primarily focused on the nature of the Gospel message.
- Matthew gives the most comprehensive view of the matter, as such, we will use Matthew’s account to drive our analysis.
- To be clear – I am proposing to you that this commission is the answer to the question posed at the beginning of the sermon. Herein lies our authority to exist, and to operate as a church – a New Testament assembly. We have not received a direct,

personal commission, or direct revelations, or visions, or prophecies like the prophets and apostles did. Yet we have absolutely been enlisted, and sent forth under the banner of the cross, carrying the authority to speak in the name of Christ. So let us consider this commission in detail so that we have full assurance to do this blessed work.

- As we examine this matter, I want you to be aware of a particular false doctrine that has arisen surrounding this commission. Every once in a while we stumble upon some little church that seems to hold most of the fundamental doctrines – it’s always surprising to find ANYONE in these dark days that professes election, or reprobation, or the sovereignty of God. Thus far, each of these that we have encountered have turned out to be a mirage: they might preach these doctrines to the few people in their pews, but it is a lifeless, academic exercise, devoid of the experience of grace. I have experienced this several times recently – spending many hours looking closely at several churches - and have noticed a common theme: each of them has included in their “Confession of Faith” the satanic notion that this Great Commission was ONLY for the Apostles, and that it does not apply to the churches. At first I was only puzzled - I knew I didn’t agree - but it took a while for me to recognize just how satanic that doctrine is; consider: 1) They take that position for **one purpose** – to excuse themselves from having to hazard their lives in the public preaching of the Gospel! They want to have a neat, tidy existence behind the walls of their castle; they want to bury their “talent” in the ground, rather than investing it into the work of the Kingdom of Christ. They claim the moniker of the “salt of the earth”, but they are not salty! They don’t zealously preach the delicious and preservative nature of the Gospel to the world - they hoard it for themselves! They call themselves the “light of the world”, but they hide their light under a basket! They are ashamed of Christ, and unless they repent of that lukewarm cowardice, He will be ashamed of them at his coming! 2) When they give away the authority of this commission, seeking to loose themselves from the command to preach to every creature, they inadvertently give away **every bit of authority that they have to exist!** In order to fulfill their own desire, they have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage! They carelessly put their candlestick in the pile of stuff for the next garage sale! Woe and beware!

We will break our analysis of Matthew’s account into 5 clauses:

1) **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore:**

- First, our Lord establishes his own power and authority; it is by that authority that he makes this commission, and under that authority that we are to obediently execute upon it. We see clearly that his authority is over everything, both in heaven and in earth!

- **Hebrews 2:10** “**For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**”
- Henry: *“Where he has this power; in heaven and earth, comprehending the universe. Christ is the sole universal Monarch, he is Lord of all(Acts 10:36). He has all power in heaven. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants (Ephesians 1:20,21). He has power of intercession with his Father ... he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. By him kings reign. All souls are his, and to him every heart and knee must bow, and every tongue confess him to be the Lord. This our Lord Jesus tells them, not only to satisfy them of the authority he had to commission them, and to bring them out in the execution of their commission, but to take off the offence of the cross; they had no reason to be ashamed of Christ crucified, when they saw him thus glorified.”*
- The authority of Christ is granted by the Father, and is absolute, and yet it is contested in this world. Herein lies the Quarrel of the Covenant; herein we are called to be soldiers under the banner of our Captain.
 - Henry: *“We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contesting it; the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had a usurped kingdom and exercised dominion to such a degree that he has been called the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in and the god of the world we live in. He knows very well that, as the Messiah’s kingdom rises and gets ground, his falls and loses ground; and therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely.”*
- Go ye therefore: Here we are commanded to go – we are his purchased possession, and as such, are his to command! He has constrained us, and caused us to love his commands, and to run to fulfill them – praise God for that mercy, and pray God for that continued mercy!
 - Henry: *“They must not take state, and issue out summons to the nations to attend upon them; but they must go, and bring the gospel to their doors, Go ye. They had doted on Christ’s bodily presence, and hung upon that, and built all their joys and hopes upon that; but now Christ discharges them from further attendance on his person, and sends them abroad about other work. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly (#De 32:11), so Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves over all the world.”*
 - I love the imagery of the eagle that Henry uses, because it puts me in mind of the promise that when Christ returns, we will most assuredly be gathered back to him: **“Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” (Luke 17:37)**
- Who is the “ye” that Christ is commanding and investing with this authority?

- Clearly he is directly instructing these 11 apostles (Matthias and Paul had not yet been added to their ranks). Indeed the Apostles had a particular and wonderful role to play. They had been witness to all that Christ said and did, and were to proclaim their testimony of those things to the world; for this very purpose, they were endowed with extraordinary gifts (healing, speaking in foreign tongues, prophecies, etc.)
 - **Hebrews 2:3,4 “3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”**
- The work of the Apostles was done in order to lay the foundation for the New Testament age: they taught and confirmed the words of Christ, and they established the pattern and practice of the New Testament church. The Holy Spirit, working in them, planted deep roots that Satan has been (and will be) unable to destroy – despite his continual, tireless efforts. Having laid that foundation, the house must still be built and maintained upon it until the return of our Lord – this is the work of the church!
 - **Ephesians 2:19-22 “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”**
 - The **church** is the pillar and ground of the truth: “... the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1Timothy 3:15)
 - When Christ ascended to heaven, he gave gifts to men: some he made apostles, prophets, and evangelists (these particular men working to lay the foundation), and some pastors and teachers (for the continual building and edifying of the church upon that foundation until the return of Christ).
 - **Ephesians 4:8,11-16 “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of**

the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

- Free agents don't get to lay claim to this commission, or this authority!
 - This language doesn't allow for a prideful, self-willed solo artist: **“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)**
 - In “The Revelation” that was delivered to John, showing forth the Day of the Lord, we find Christ walking exclusively amongst - and speaking from the midst of - his churches; their pastors are ornaments on his hand. (Revelation 1:10-20)
 - **Matthew 16:16-19 “16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”**
 - The church is built upon the rock – the foundation - of supernatural faith in Christ our Savior, assembled and united together by the public profession and maintenance of that faith. Again, we see that Christ dwells amongst, protects, and prospers the work of those assembled together after the pattern of the church.

The next three clauses of this commission establish the work that is to be done. It is a progression of work that is laid out in a particular, meaningful order: Teach (Make Disciples), Baptize, Teach.

2) Teach all nations

- Teach – this first instruction to teach is unique from the second.
 - The Greek word is **matheteuo**.

- To teach, to make a disciple (to cause to follow). KJV translates it as “disciple” at Matthew 27:57.
 - Command them to stop their current course, and follow after Christ.
 - This instruction aligns with the instruction in Mark and Luke to “Preach” – The Greek word in both places is **kerusso**.
 - To be a herald; To publish; proclaim openly and publicly; suggesting formality, gravity and authority which must be listened to and obeyed.
 - Until a person shows a sincere interest, this is largely a one-way communication – that’s the nature of a herald. We haven’t been sent to barter, parlay, or swap theories.
- Preach to who?
 - All nations; every creature. This language is global in:
 - Location – Everywhere that humans live.
 - Race - Every nationality, every type of person – Jew or Gentile, bond or free, etc.
 - Time – Those that were walking the earth at that moment, and those that would come after, until the return of the Lord.
 - The unconverted. What need is there to make disciples of those who are already disciples?
 - **Romans 10:12-15 “12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 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? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”**
- What are we preaching to this broad audience?
 - The Gospel; repentance and remission of sins through Christ. (Mark and Luke accounts)
 - In short, we owe a debt to preach this simple message to every person that we can get our hands on, by whatever means the Lord appoints for us: You were born in sin, are living in sin, and are headed for hell; your only hope of salvation is through the blood of Christ – believe on him, and repent. That message necessarily includes other things: sin; the doctrines of grace; the sovereignty of God; the deity of Christ, etc.
 - For a much more thorough view of “The Gospel”, I refer you to the excellent sermon that our brother Ben preached (9/11/16).

3) Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

- Baptize who?

- Mark's account makes this answer clear: "**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**"
 - This passage does not make baptism a necessary condition for salvation; the thief on the cross was not baptized (he died before he could be), and yet he was saved. However, this passage makes clear that it has been commanded, and is to be expected for any person professing belief. If you claim to be a believer, and yet have not submitted to this blessed ordinance, then you testify against yourself.
- The focus has now shifted to the converted believer – the newly made disciple - who has been converted by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel.
- Consistent with the words and work of John the Baptist and the apostle Philip, the proper candidate for baptism is one who makes a good profession; one who confesses their sinful nature, and therefore their need for, and belief in Christ. They must bring forth fruit meet for repentance. (**Matthew 3:1-12; Acts 8:26-40**)
 - This inherently disqualifies non-believers. It also disqualifies those who are unable to make a profession - like infants.
- The nature of baptism:
 - This simple act of obedience by the penitent believer makes public their profession of belief in Jesus Christ, and gives earnest of their intention to forsake the world and obediently follow after their Lord.
 - Baptism symbolizes our fellowship with Jesus Christ, being engrafted into His body, in His death, burial and resurrection. It shows our need to be dead in the flesh, and reborn in the spirit, to newness of life - putting off the old man of the flesh, and putting on the new man of the spirit.
 - A person is not baptized into a church, but rather into the body of Christ; However, baptism does make a person eligible to be considered for membership in a local church.
 - Who is to perform a baptism? As we have already established, the authority to execute upon this commission has passed from the Apostles to the churches. The churches invest that authority into particular men, by choosing out Elders from among themselves. (**Titus 1:5**)
 - Note: baptism is not for the sake of the baptizer; it is for the sake of the disciple. As such, the baptizer is often downplayed, or not even identified in the scriptures. (ex: **Acts 10:48**)
 - It is to be done by immersion in water. (**Mark 1:10; Acts 8:39**)
 - For a more detailed look at the nature, purpose, and method of baptism, you can reference the sermon that I gave on that topic (11/10/13).
- It is to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

- We are to make disciples for Christ – not for a person, or a particular church, or a church hierarchy. As such, we are not supposed to baptize in any name other than God’s. Here’s an example where a false prophet had baptized in the name of a man:
 - **Acts 19:1-5 “3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”** See also, **1Corinthians 1.**
- Notice that the word “name” is singular, even though there are three names, thereby showing that the three parts of the Godhead are one.
- In these three names, the baptizer professes the authority of the ordinance, and the disciple professes their belief in the triune God, His attributes and various roles within the covenant of grace.

4) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you

- Teaching who?
 - This is not merely a repetition of the instruction to “teach” in clause #2. The focus has now shifted to the continual work of edification that is to be done amongst believers; these are people that have been made disciples of Christ, have been baptized, and are now assembled with a local church.
- Teaching them:
 - The Greek word is **didasko**.
 - To cause to learn; To discharge the office of a teacher; To hold discourse with others in order to instruct them; to explain or expound; to instill doctrine.
 - As opposed to the one-way communication of a herald, this is now the continual, laborious work of teaching within the church. The churches serve as a school – as Gramps used to say: this is the Golden Candlestick University.
 - What is to be taught? We must teach ALL that Christ commanded – “all the counsel of God” (**Acts 20:27**) – the whole of the scriptures. Not diminishing those things that don’t suit us, and not adding burdens to lay upon people, like some modern day Pharisee. No private interpretation that fits our fleshly view of things; we must bend our thoughts to the words of scripture – the plumb line.
 - Henry: *“The duty of disciples, of all baptized Christians; they must observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, and, in order to that, must submit to the teaching of those whom he sends. Our admission into the visible church is in order to something further; when Christ hath disciplined us, he hath not done with us; he enlists soldiers that he may train them up for his service. It is the duty of the apostles of Christ, and his ministers, to teach the commands of Christ, to*

expound them to his disciples, to press upon them the necessity of obedience, and to assist them in applying the general commands of Christ to particular cases. They must teach them, not their own inventions, but the institutions of Christ; to them they must religiously adhere, and in the knowledge of them Christians must be trained up. A standing ministry is hereby settled in the church, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the perfect man."

- This duty falls first to the Elders within a church – they are to be teachers, laboring in the word and doctrine. (**1 Timothy 5:17**) Yet, this is a work that is to be performed by every member of a church, in a way that is appropriate to their experience, understanding, and station.
 - Titus 2 describes the process of the older people teaching the younger people – beginning with their own proper example. This process is:
 - 1) **Relative**: With the exception of the youngest people in our assembly, each person is older than someone; also, this is not simply a matter of age – each of us has different experiences, whereby the Lord has helped us to have better understanding of the scriptures, and how to apply them to our lives. We each bring those experiences to the table to help one another, regardless of age.
 - 2) **Iterative**: The Lord teaches us a thing, causing the light of the scriptures to shine more perfectly on the path of our life (**Proverbs 4:18**). Having learned, we change our behavior consistent with the lesson. That amended behavior becomes an example for others. By our word and deed, we teach the next person. That person internalizes, and often improves upon the lesson, which they then teach to the next person
 - **Ephesians 4:16** “**From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**”
 - This work is to be engaged in continually – when we are sowing to the Spirit, and searching the scriptures as we ought to be, then the word of God is burning within our hearts, and bursting forth from our lips, to the edification and encouragement of our brothers and sisters.
 - **Colossians 3:16** “**16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**”

5) **Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world:**

- Lo, I am with you always:

- Finally, our Lord promises that he is with us in the execution of this wonderful commission. He is with us - the Word of God is on our lips, and the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, teaching and comforting us.
- Indeed, our Redeemer liveth! (**Job 19:25**) He ever liveth, and is able to save us to the uttermost! (**Hebrews 7:25**)
- Notice that he says “**I am** with you”, not “I will be with you” – similar to the way that God described himself to Moses, in giving him a commission:
 - **Exodus 3:14 “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.**
 - This name of God speaks to his eternal nature, and his immutability; his constancy and faithfulness in fulfilling all that he has promised.
 - **Revelation 1:8 “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”**
- This promise implies that he is with us as we are in the **obedient** execution of this commission. If we are adding to, or diminishing from the scriptures, then we have laid aside his authority, and he is NOT with us. If we begin to build on a foundation other than Christ, then our work will crumble, and we will be without help.
- Even unto the end of the world:
 - **Hebrews 13:5 “... I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”**
 - This speaks to the enduring nature of the commission; this is the continual work of the churches of God, until the moment that we meet our Savior in the air.
 - He closes his presence on the earth with this reassuring promise; later he closes the canon of scripture with similar reassurance: “**He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20)**

My dear friends, as long as we draw breath, this is our work to do – what a blessed lot our God has appointed for us! Let us help one another to make full proof of our ministry!

I love you all. Amen.