

## Therefore, Go!

Chauncey and I had lunch Friday afternoon and discussed a few topics regarding witnessing and sharing God's Truth. As we were talking a few thoughts came to mind regarding sharing God's Word. While we are to have a ready answer for all those who seek God's Truth (**1 Peter 3:15**), I began to think about our witness, to who and why and also "The Great Commission" of **Matthew 28:19-20**-

"Therefore, go and *make disciples* in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the completion of the age." Amen." (AFV) A word that is different in the King James version in verse 19- "Go ye therefore and *teach* all nations" is better translated as "make disciples."

Also, in **Matthew 24:14**- "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come." (AFV)

It is purely a statement of fact by Jesus Christ, prophesying that the gospel *will* be preached in all the world as a witness, and then will the end come.

The point I'm making here is that **Matthew 24:14** and **Matthew 28:19-20** are not one and the same. In **Matthew 28:19-20**, though preaching as a witness is included within the scope of the commission, it is actually placing more emphasis upon the

entire *process* of conversion, by “teaching them to “*observe all things* that I have commanded you” (feeding, growing, overcoming sin/flesh), than merely witnessing as in **Matthew 24:14**. The key word here is "process." The words "all things” cannot be done by witnessing alone. Preaching the gospel at best, to the world *begins* the process of teaching. It is life-long growth in God’s Way of life. Disciples are created through solid nourishing, a believing response in those who hear (have been called per **John 6:44**), combined with overcoming. All the teaching required to make a disciple does not take place merely in making a witness. It doesn’t happen overnight.

The emphasis from verses 19-20 through witnessing is the feeding of the flock. When we speak of the flock, we mean the called, the elect, God’s future children. These are the ones who are called by God and are being prepared for His Kingdom. **1 Peter 5:2-3**- “Feed the flock *of God that is among you*, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an eager attitude*; Not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but *by being examples* to the flock *of God*.” It takes a lot a feeding and experiences with God, for Christ to be formed in us. This says we are to feed those of God’s flock (**Eze. 34:15, 23**), the ones He has already called (again John 6:44). Does this mean we are to ignore the others? Certainly not as this would seemingly contradict **Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15**.

We are to readily share God's truth with anyone He brings to us. Baptize those who repent and so wish to follow. Our conduct should reflect the light of God that He may draw them. But keep in mind, we are not about going door to door or handing out tracts in parking lots. Jesus tells us in **Matthew 7:6**- "Do not give that which *is* holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn around and tear you in pieces." We have been entrusted with the precious Truth of God and we are not to throw it on the ground. How we share God's Truth and Gospel is crucial. Jesus warns us in **Matthew 23:15** of such in how we share the truth, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves." He makes it clear what happens when shepherds fail their flocks as well. **Jer. 23:1-2**- "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture," says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, "You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings," says the LORD." If we preach any other Gospel we are accursed (**Gal. 1:8-9**).

Not all of God's servants are given the same marching orders. Preaching the gospel to the world is only the beginning of the chapter. **1 Cor. 12:28**- “And God Himself has placed certain *ones* in the church: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then miracles; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; various languages.”

**Ephesian 4:11**- “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” While we all share in growing to the image and fulness of Jesus Christ, our individual assignments may vary. The members of God’s Church have always planted seeds. God will then water and cultivate those who will become His first fruits. Our function is not and has never been adding members to the Body of Christ. The calling is God’s and God’s alone. So, if we think we’re out doing God’s work and we’re doing it amiss out of the flesh, well...it is doubtful there will be successful results (**Proverbs 3:5**). A few of the churches and denominations that I have attended over the years, like most today, are more concerned with a body count and entertaining their congregations than they are with preaching God’s Word. The growth of a church has been equated to the number of attendees, how big is their sanctuary, their music program and so on. One church kept track of how many were “saved” by raising their hands saying the “sinner’s prayer” during the closing prayer. Our spiritual growth is

determined by the quality of our personal relationship with God Almighty. Not by numbers, beating tambourines or hustling miracle spring water.

**Luke 12:31-32-** “But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not be afraid, *little flock*, for your Father delights in giving you the kingdom.” “Little flock” implies that that God is not saving everyone now. As frustrating and heartbreaking as this is when sharing God’s truth with a friend or family member that “*just doesn’t get it*”, it just may not be their time for hearing God’s Truth. Their time will come in the Second Resurrection. **2 Peter 3:9-** “The Lord is not delaying the promise *of His coming*, as some in their own minds reckon delay; rather, He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance.” We’re nearly 2000 years from when Jesus had His earthly ministry. Some of those witnessing the miracles live still did not believe. Even the Nation of Israel witnessed all the plagues and deliverance from Egypt and still rebelled against God. Remember the Essay “You Can’t Fix Stupid?”

The key principle to remember is that you were faithful and obedient to witness to someone God sent your way. Throughout His ministry, Jesus emphasizes the truth that God's elect, those who are presently being set apart, is a limited group. He says

in the Sermon on the Mount, "For narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it."- **Matthew 7:14**.

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed illustrates that God's calling falls on "good ground" only a small percentage of the time (**Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23**).

God wants the Gospel message Jesus brought to be preached to everyone. It is the primary work of God's Church. He tasked His apostles with spreading it throughout the world. **1 Cor. 9:16**- "For though I preach the gospel, there is no *reason* for me to boast because an obligation has been laid upon me. And woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel!" The Church of God and most Christian churches of this world agree totally on this point: Jesus commands His church to preach the gospel. However, at this point, the two groups deviate, explicitly on the central question, "Why is the church to preach the gospel?" The answer tells how well we believe and understand God and His purpose for mankind. We know we are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (**Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4, Deut. 8:3**). This includes keeping His true Sabbaths and Holy Days. Deviation from teaching God's Truth as it is written has severe consequences (**Rev. 22:18-19**). It will also limit our understanding of God's Word.

Paul provides an example of teaching and preaching in **Acts 20:27**- “For I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God.” God tells us in **Isaiah 28:10** that "precept must be on precept, precept on precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.” We must share God’s truth in its entirety. Both Old and New Testaments. Today’s “cut and paste” Christian doctrines ignore God’s complete Word and tailor it to fit their agenda. We must share the gospel in the right way for the right reasons. We must always seek to “walk as He walked” (**1 John 2:6**) and to “follow in His footsteps” (**1 Peter 2:21**).

With all the various denominations of so-called Christianity out there, they all seem to forget one important principle. I know you probably get tired of me saying this scripture, but it is fundamental in witnessing to anyone. **John 6:44**- “*No one* can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

It is further emphasized in **John 6:65**- “And He said, “For this reason, I have said to you, *no one* can come to Me unless it has been given to him from My Father.”

While we may have the most noble of intentions when we reach out to someone with our “witness” unless God is drawing them our labor may be in vain (**Psalms 127:1**). Now this doesn’t mean we’re to hang out on the porch and do nothing. We’re to display the character of our Savior Jesus Christ in our daily living. The

example we set. **Matthew 5:16**- “In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven.” (**Philippians 2:15**)

**Romans 3:11**- “There is not one who understands; there is not one who seeks after God.”

God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called. Most people will not “get it” and come to God's truth and way of life. While He may send out His message broadly, salvation isn't open to everyone just now. God The Father chooses the individuals to come to Christ and believe and be in His First Fruits.

So, the idea that we are to preach the gospel to save the world is misguided. God never says such a thing in His Word. The best reason for us to preach the Gospel is in **Mark 1:14-15**- “Now after the imprisonment of John, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, “The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is near at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.” The Gospel is a warning message of repentance, a call to turn from sin, because God's Kingdom will soon be established, when God "will render to each one according to his deeds" (**Romans 2:6**). As we read earlier, Jesus said "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come.” **Matthew 24:14**. A witness provides

testimony. Unlike some of the lies spilled in courts by “witnesses” our witness must be one of complete and total truth of the Word of God. Our testimony tells of Who God is, what are His values, what His plan is and how He is fulfilling His Creation’s purpose. We will have no excuse when His destruction comes upon the world for mankind’s many sins. From those who are fortunate enough to hear His truth in this lifetime, God selects a few to be chosen to become members of His family so He can teach them His ways, “to observe all things that I have commanded you.” The Gospel message is not a message of salvation for all people, at least not yet. We know God does not want any to perish but all come to repentance (**2 Peter 3:9**). But for today, God is choosing a small remnant of those who have been called and are truly seeking and loving Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength (**Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27**). To these He has given understanding of His true Gospel message. We’re ready to go!

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