

Mark 16: 9-16; “Go Into All the World”, Sermon # 116 in the series – “Astonished at His Teaching”, delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 1st, 2016, in the Morning Worship Service.

The experience of Christ, risen from the dead, was different for different ones of the apostles and the disciples. It is apparent that the Lord deliberately chose to reveal Himself to Mary Magdalene first so that she would be a witness to the apostles as they mourned and wept on the morning of the third day. This was to test their faith. Their response to her, which is recorded for us in verse 11, is really quite revealing. It says, “And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.” It is very strange that those who were the closest to Christ would have had such a hard time believing that He was raised from the dead; when on numerous occasions He had told them that He would be raised from the dead on the third day. Enter more witnesses. Christ revealed Himself to the two on the road to Emmaus as they walked and went into the country, and He opened their eyes to who He was, while they broke bread together at the end of the day. And then He vanished from their sight, and they ran all the way back the seven miles, in the dark, to be able to tell the apostles. But it says here in verse 13, that the apostles did not believe them either.

And so, afterward, He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table, and it says here in verse 14 – “He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.” In other words – They should have believed the testimony of those who had already seen Him risen from the dead, even if they themselves had not. Is it possible for true Christians to fall into unbelief and hardness of heart? It most certainly is, and so each of us should check ourselves in this regard. Have we become skeptical concerning the Risen Christ’s power to save and do great things in the world today, in the salvation of many souls to God? Are we unbelieving when it says in the Bible, in Zechariah 9: 22, that a day will come when – “Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord?” And, a few verses later in Zechariah 9: 10 it says – “He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth?” (Zechariah 9:10)

You see, if Christ was raised from the dead on the third day, just as He said He would be, and His own apostles and disciples were skeptical and unbelieving when they were told that He was risen from the dead, then I believe that it may just be possible that a good many Christians may be skeptical in our day too, as to whether the Great Commission will be fulfilled, and the nations will come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. But let us see the mercy of the Lord here. The Lord Jesus, after He reproved them, He commissioned them. He says to these hardhearted unbelieving apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” So, this morning I want to speak to you about the responsibility which each and every Christian has, to do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission as it is given to us here in this passage. 1st of all – Our responsibility to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 2nd – Our responsibility to preach faith to unbelieving people as a duty. Let us pray that this sermon will be a means to stir us up to a greater diligence in evangelism, as we realize that many people around us are perishing.

1st of all – According to this text we have a responsibility to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

The beauty and simplicity of these words ought to be apparent, but sometimes it is not. Sometimes we do not see that every Christian who is able to understand these words has a responsibility to witness for their Lord. When Jesus told the apostles that they were to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, He knew that His own 12 apostles would not be able to fulfill this commission by themselves, in their particular generation. He was giving it to them, yes, in order that they might go and preach to their generation; to see how far their labors for

the spreading of the gospel and instructing with the word of God could take them. But He also gave them this Commission in order that it would be written down, so that it would be given to all other Christians in all other generations of Church History, so that eventually it would be completely fulfilled. We read in the book of Acts, chapter 2, verse 5, that on the foundation day for the beginning of the New Testament Church, on the Day of Pentecost, the apostles preached with great success to thousands of people. It says that there were, dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And they all were hearing the gospel preached to them in their own language, because the gift of speaking in tongues was used with such great effectiveness by the power of the Holy Spirit on that day. The apostles were preaching and using the gift of tongues to communicate the truth to many nations of people.

The people who were preached to that day, were all amazed and they marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language, in which we were born?’ “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya joining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” What a great start to the New Testament Church. Peter preached to them a sermon in the power of the Holy Spirit, and he addressed the house of Israel as well as all of these visitors. He was preaching the gospel to every creature; that is, every person from all of these different countries and backgrounds that was present there that day in Jerusalem.

He preached Christ and His sufferings at the hands of wicked men; He preached Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of the Father. He preached that what they were beholding in the tongues of fire was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel in the Old Testament; that in the last days, in the times of this New Testament Church age, that God would pour out of His Spirit on all flesh, and the redeemed sons and daughters of God would prophesy; the young men would see visions and the old men would dream prophetic dreams, and on God’s menservants and His maidservants He would pour out His Spirit in those days; and they would prophesy.

On that day, Peter and the apostles did not have to go into all the world; the then known world, came to them. Peter preached to them that they should believe in this Jesus; He who had recently been put to death by some of the very people who were now standing there listening to Peter. They had been standing by approving of those who condemned Jesus, when the leaders of Israel sent Him to Pilate to have Him put to death. Peter told them to repent, and he told them that every one of them should be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins; that is, that if they called upon Jesus name, they would find the reality of the fact that Jesus Christ remitted (he fully paid the price) of their sin-debt, when He suffered on the cross. There He paid the just penalty for all the transgressions of all those who would believe in Him. After they believed, he told them, that in connection with their faith, those who believed should be baptized to show forth their identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and their new-found spiritual union with Him. Three thousand souls were added to the church that day.

But this was just the beginning of the fulfillment of this Great Commission. Peter and the apostles were given the keys of the kingdom and they would open the door of faith, by preaching to people in Judea, and Samaria, and eventually in other surrounding areas, telling them of their need to be saved by faith in Christ. Peter would open the door of faith to the Gentiles, after he received in a vision, the knowledge that he was not to consider any creature unclean. The meaning of this vision, of the sheet let down from heaven, the sheet that was filled with many kinds of common and unclean animals, and his being instructed by God to – “Arise kill and eat,” all of this was God’s telling him that he should not be afraid to preach to any Gentile person the gospel of Christ. What God had cleansed, he was told, he was not to consider unclean. So the “creatures” referred to in Mark 16: 15 are none other than people from everywhere in the world. And the proof that this

commission was not simply given to the apostles of that day, is that they could in no way, just the 12 of them, preach the gospel to every creature, not only in their own time, but we must understand that this Commission would continue for the whole time period of all the generations, from that one until the end of the world.

In Matthew 28: 18 Jesus said to His apostles – “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in 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 to the end of the age.” Well, the apostles in just a few years would die and go to heaven, and if the commission was just given to them, all would have ended. But God has given this commission to the pastor-teachers of all succeeding generations as well. They would be the ones who would have the authority, formally given them in local churches, to preach and teach the gospel and to baptize the disciples who were made.

But I believe that the Lord Jesus would have us to understand that this does not mean that other disciples, Christians who are not pastor-teachers, cannot be involved in preaching and sharing the truth in the right way under the authority of the local church. There are two Greek words which are used for preaching in the New Testament. The first is Kerusso (κερυσσω) which means to herald the news as a public crier. And it implies that the one heralding has been appointed to this work by the church. The other word is found in Acts chapter 8, verse 4 that all the believers who were scattered because of the persecution that came to believers in Jerusalem, following the killing of Stephen, they “went about everywhere preaching the word,” it says there. The word “preaching” there in the Greek is word evangelidzo (εβανγγελιζω) which means to announce the good news, to share it with others, to evangelize them.

In Acts 8: 5 it says that Philip went down to the city of Samaria and he preached Christ unto them. That was kerusso; he was formally called to herald the good news as an evangelist. But the others who had no formal calling to be a preacher or pastor, God still used them to preach in this sense that we are talking about – “gossiping the gospel” to as many as they came into contact with. This is preaching the gospel to every creature, and it is something that you and I should pray to be able to do, and we should deliberately go about to speak to others about Christ and the glorious gospel of salvation to all sinners who will trust in Him. Let me ask you whether you have sufficiently considered the fact that this Great Commission was given to you, dear believer, just as much as it was to the apostles of old? Each Christian has a part to play.

Do you not see that going into all the world does not simply mean that at some point you might consider becoming a missionary to a foreign country to bring the gospel to tribes and peoples who have never heard, but it means the world around you, as far as you think that you can take it. The apostles started in Jerusalem, and then they took it to Judea, and then to Samaria, and then they began to go to the uttermost parts of the world. But I want you to see, and I think that Christ through this text wants you to see, that there is a wide world all around you every day. And you have the responsibility according to the gift or gifts that God has given you, to take the gospel to every creature. How can you become a missionary to the ends of the earth if you are not a missionary here; if you are not a witness here? You cannot. You must first learn to witness here before you can go over there.

This past Thursday evening, there was a dinner given by the State Bank of Toledo which was celebrating the 90th anniversary of the bank’s existence. It was hosted by the bank employees and it was free, and so hundreds of people turned out for it. All the employees of the bank were serving this dinner, my wife Jenni among them. I took Chris Welshans with me and when we sat down at the table, I began a conversation with the man on my right, a man who was 88 years old. As we conversed, I asked him about himself and it turned out that he had lived here in this community all of his life; mostly however living in the country, working on a farm. He asked me about myself, and I told him that I was the pastor of the church here, and then I asked him whether he went to church anywhere. He said – “No, I have never gone to church in my whole life.” He told me that when he

worked 6 days a week, he thought that there were other things that he could find to do on Sunday. Well, this was my opportunity to either be quiet or change the subject, but I was given the grace to tell him that we all need Jesus to save us from our sins, because we have many sins. That is all that I said to him, but I believe that it was what the Lord would have me to say to him. I was very thankful to have shared this little bit of truth with him, which if he thinks about it, and acts upon it, by believing in Jesus, it will save his soul. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; people of all kinds, all colors, all races, all nations, whether they are cultured and refined, or whether they are barbarians. Going into all the world starts right here where you are.

2nd – I want you to see from this text that every believer has a responsibility to preach faith to unbelieving people as a duty.

Verse 16 says: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” This is the true gospel, and it is to be forthrightly preached and shared by all Christians with whosoever will listen, and whosoever will not listen, so that they might begin to listen. The reason being, that all people in every generation, with the exception of Christ, are sinners by nature and practice. All men are free moral agents, even though they do not have free will. It is the reason that a person can be moral and yet be unsaved. They do not have free will in truly good and spiritual things because they are slaves to sin and their carnal minds are enmity to God. And yet, even though we know this to be true, and the Bible clearly reveals it, yet we must preach to men that they must believe in Christ to be saved, and the exercise of their faith does involve choice and decision. Every person who would be saved must come to the place, through the preaching of the word and the Holy Spirit’s working, to choose to believe in the Lord Jesus. They must act upon the gospel message preached, and believe, or they will perish. He who believes will be saved. Let each of us must be clear on this essential truth; every person who would be saved must believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. If they do not believe they will be damned, or as the New King James has it – condemned.

I must say, that in thinking over the way that this is worded in the New King James, I do believe that the word “damned” in the King James is the right word to be used in this verse, as it is talking about what will happen to a sinful person if they do not believe in Christ. They will die and go to hell. It is not simply that they will be condemned for it in some general sense; but there will be definite consequences for their not believing. They will perish everlastingly in their sins. They will be cast into the lake of fire. They will end up in the bottomless pit. The reason that I believe that the word “condemned” is not quite as good a word that could be used, as “damned”, is because there is not the fullness of meaning in the word “condemned” as there is in the word “damned”. This is verified by what is said by our Lord in John 3: 18 – “He who believes in Him (that is, in Jesus) is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

This verse tells us that not only will condemnation someday come upon a person in the judgment when they are sent to hell, but they are most certainly under condemnation now, and so it is imperative, it is of the utmost importance, that they believe in Christ now, while they still have life. For they will most certainly end up in hell if they do not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. I want you to see this tremendous truth, that if a person is saved from their sins, it is because they have seen for themselves that they have a responsibility, a solemn duty, to believe in Christ, or they will perish. All who are here today who have never believed I urge you, I beseech you, I plead with you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you will be saved.

All people who are outside of Christ, those who have never believed in Christ and His finished work of obedience, sufferings, redemption and death, are presently under the condemnation of God, under His righteous wrath, even now, if they have never believed. How important it is that you and I proclaim this, when we preach to people, and when we share with them the gospel; that they would come to see that they are guilty of sin and that they are responsible to believe in Christ. It is their duty. But also in preaching in this way we pray that that they would see the love of God

for them as sinners, even though this is the truth that we preach to them. It was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us; not when we had reformed our own life enough, that we then thought that we could believe. All who know the doctrines of grace know that a person cannot believe unless God comes to them and gives them grace. But if God's grace in terms of their responsibility is not understood by them correctly, if it leads them to do nothing, or to wait for God to do something to them which they can feel, so that they can then believe and feel that they have a warrant from Him to believe on that basis, that He will have mercy on them and save them, they will have totally missed the point of the exhortation given to them to believe. No, a sinful person's warrant to believe is found in God's promises to them in Christ and His commanding them to repent and to believe. That is all the warrant that you need, O sinner.

God has already done everything necessary for you to be saved, through what Christ has accomplished. You need to see the love of God in Christ Jesus; that He laid down His life for a sinner like you. It is true that by nature, you are unable and unwilling to come to Christ. You are dead in your trespasses and sins. You cannot make yourself alive. But when you hear the gospel you must understand that even though you are weak and helpless in yourself that God has all power to justly deliver you from all of your sins. Your sins may be as scarlet, but He will wash them white as snow. They may be red like crimson, but in Christ's blood your mind and conscience shall be delivered of the guilt of sin and made white as wool in God's sight. I believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation. I hope that you do too. I believe that the salvation of any person is based upon the fact that God in eternity past chose them in Christ, and that in time and space, He sent His Son, and Christ died for all of God's elect people.

But I want you to see something that is very important to the right preaching of the gospel. It is, that God's sovereign work is something secret to the one being preached to, and it is intended to be that way. In His interaction with any person hearing the gospel God reasons with that person very personally and He very really strives with them as though He were one man talking to another. Listen to Isaiah 1: 18 once again – "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "If you are willing and obedient, (that is if you are willing and obedient by faith to trust in My word) you shall eat of the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Ah, the matter is stated very plainly and very clearly here in terms of the sinner's responsibility. Election and predestination do not enter in to the presentation at all; but the sinner's responsibility to repent and to believe are the very essence of the gospel message.

I am saying to you that when you preach the gospel, dear Christian, do not start with election; rather, start with man's depravity, and show the person that you are talking to, how all men are sinners and what sin is, and what it deserves in the sight of the holy God. And then move on to show them God's remedy for this awful plight. Declare to them God's love and mercy in Christ, and their responsibility to look to Him for forgiveness, for life, and for strength to do God's will; that salvation is not of their works, their doings, their resolutions to do better. They need to be saved from these dead works as well. But do not tell them that they may not be one of God's elect, and only time will tell if God will have mercy on them. The doctrine of election is not the gospel. And the doctrine of predestination is not their warrant to believe. These are precious truths but they do not need to enter in to the gospel presentation as such. Rather, they will be learned after that person has believed, and as they begin to learn and grow in the Scriptures, as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The faithful gospel presentation is this – You are a sinner and you must have a Savior to be forgiven of your sins in the sight of the holy God. God must punish sin wherever He finds it. He has no other option to Himself, but to be faithful to His own character and His righteous expectation of you, except to punish you, if you do not believe in Jesus. He has punished His dear and only begotten Son at the cross in your place if you will believe in Him. This is His only remedy

for the problem of your guilt, and the cleansing of your conscience in His sight. Jesus, therefore was sent by God to become a substitute for your sins. He rendered to God a perfect obedience to His holy law on your behalf, and He died so that all the punishment due you, for your committing all of your sins, is laid upon Him. This was done by Him in the past some 2,000 years ago, but His transaction with you takes place in the present, and the cleansing and the imputation of righteousness in your justification takes place in the present. You are taken out from under the wrath of God, having been a child of wrath, and you are declared righteous in justification, and you are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and you will experience all of His good teaching and work to conform you to the image of Christ throughout the rest of your life.

Therefore, when you believe in Jesus you are reconciled to God. You are now in His eternal favor, and because of His grace working in your heart, you have been set free from sin and you can now live to God. The way a person realizes that they have come to have eternal life is to first of all to know that they have believed the gospel. The truth of your having believed will be sealed with the work of the Holy Spirit who is given to you. Grace at work in your life will bring forth evidential fruit that you are a true Christian. The Spirit will bear witness with your Spirit that you are a child of God. But it all begins with faith in the gospel. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but will have everlasting life. This simplicity of the gospel has some very practical implications to it, which we who preach and share it, need to take notice of.

We do not preach that a person needs to wait to believe in Christ, or wait to receive Christ until they feel that they are worthy. We should never give a seeking person the impression that they should wait until they feel that the Holy Spirit has done some kind of work in them to prepare them to receive the gospel and be saved. They simply need to believe the truth of the gospel and they will be saved. This leads me to want to speak to you about the importance of not becoming trapped logically by the error of Hyper-Calvinism either when you are sharing the gospel with someone, or if you are trying to explain the gospel to them. Hyper-Calvinism is very simply the error of thinking that God is so sovereign in the whole matter of salvation that the preacher does not really have the responsibility to preach that it is a person's duty to believe in the gospel. Since the Hyper-Calvinist believes that men are dead in trespasses and sins, they cannot make themselves spiritually alive, and since they have no life they have no ability to respond to the gospel, and therefore their duty to believe now, whether they feel themselves to be a sensible sinner or not, is left out. It really is true that God alone saves us, but He does so in the context of our responsibility to consciously and deliberately believe in the gospel and His word.

We who are Calvinists need to be careful that in our zeal for the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation, we do not limit His offers of grace in the gospel in any way. It is true that God has chosen a certain number of men to salvation before the foundation of the world, and they and they alone, will be the only ones who come to Christ. The reason that any person comes to Christ and is really and truly saved is because of God's mercy being shown to them and His grace being most definitely extended to them, and worked into their hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is true that man is passive in terms of regeneration and God giving them life. But what can happen to some Calvinists is that when they know that this is so, they then begin to wrongly think that God does not have any general love for all men, nor are any sincere offers of salvation to be preached by pastors or shared by Christians. Let us see that this really is a tragic error for it will lead us away from really doing the work of the Lord in preaching and sharing that He wants us to; that men should believe now when they hear the gospel.

Let me close by reminding you of what our verse explicitly says: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." You must believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. Baptism is the ordinance commanded by our Lord to show forth a person's faith in Him, to the church that they will join and as a witness to the watching world. But it does not say that if you are not baptized that you will be condemned. Baptism is the right

thing to do in obedience to the Lord's command, but it has no saving efficacy in itself. Let us hold to this marvelous and powerful gospel; that it is by grace alone, by faith in Christ alone, in all that He has done for us, is doing for us, and will do for us, that we are saved. And let us tell people of their duty, to believe in Him.