

Ephesians 13-09-15a

Welcome to the Sunday morning services of Grace and Truth Bible Church. I appreciate everyone's presence. We have a nice full crowd here and I know there are some attending with us at a distance.

And everyone who had birthdays this past week, happy birthday. It's my father's birthday today, number 83. I hope he follows in the trail of his older brother who is 91 this year.

And I hope all those Hull genes, you know, have that longevity built in. My grandmother lived into her 90s and we've had quite a few long-lived people. So I'm really grateful and counted a blessing that our folks are healthy and active and productive and enjoying their lives and the opportunities that God has given them for ministry.

They're both teaching this morning at church. And my dad's younger brother is visiting. My sister is visiting there.

So it's a great time of fellowship going on up north. And so I might send up a special Thanksgiving. I think everybody knows the folks.

And I pray that God will continue to bless them as he has done so magnificently in these recent years. But we are here this morning and have the opportunity to fellowship together and to celebrate our salvation, the future that God has for us. Even when we depart this life, we are promoted and advanced and enter into things that we have been preparing for throughout our time here.

And we have the privilege of shining as lights when God chooses to make our personal experience and our personal presence here meaningful to others. We have the opportunity to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ and to reflect both privately and publicly our identity in him. And our memory verse this morning out of the Joshua Code book is a reminder of the initial group that was given that opportunity.

This is Acts 1.8. We're in chapter 36 of the book, which is Acts 1.8. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. Dr. Hawkins begins by pointing out that Vince Lombardi, the coach of the Packers 40-odd years ago, lost a football game that they should have won. However, sloppy play and foolish mistakes led to their unanticipated defeat.

The next day at practice, Lombardi gathered his team together. He reached into a bag and brought out a football. I thought for Ken's benefit I would bring a football and wave it around this morning.

If you remember that video we watched a few years back, but I restrained myself. Brought out a

football. He said, This gentleman is a football.

It was, in his own indomitable way, a statement that it was time to get back to basics. When Christ was about to leave his team and return to heaven, he left them and us with a challenge to be his witnesses not only at home but also to the very ends of the earth. You'll notice that he subtly changed the singular to a plural there.

In Acts 1-8 it says, To the end, and he says ends. And there is a difference. To the ends of the earth.

A very few days earlier on the Mount in Galilee he had left the Great Commission. 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. End singular. Matthew 28, 18-20.

The Lord's commission to us was explicit, O.S. says. We are to make disciples by leading people to Christ. We are to mark these new disciples through baptism.

And then we are to mature them by teaching them to observe all things Christ commanded. This is the standard traditional understanding of these verses. There's nothing horribly wrong with it.

I think it is a little bit of a misemphasis and a bit of a misunderstanding. You're not going to sacrifice your eternal inheritance if you understand it this way. However, we have studied the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

We have studied Acts 1. And we have looked at the overall focus and emphasis in the Lord's teaching. And so I'm going to quickly cover the points that are the standard understanding of these verses. And then I'll review very quickly some additional observations that aren't often made about those two passages.

Along with a couple of others in the book of Acts. And it will help us put these words of the Lord Jesus into a perspective. It doesn't change them.

It doesn't negate them. It doesn't reinterpret them so much as put them in what I think is a helpful context. And maybe prevent us from perhaps an overemphasis that leaves out some other things.

But there's a who, what, when, where, why presentation that Dr. Hawkins continues with here. The who of evangelism. You shall be witnesses to me, he says.

You. And who is he talking to? This is a very helpful observation to make. Who is Jesus talking to when he is speaking in Acts 1.8? This is right before the ascension.

If you have your Bible handy and want to turn to Acts 1. It is important to know what happens

before something is said. It is helpful to know where it is said. It is helpful to know to whom it is said.

It is helpful to know in what circumstantial frame it is found. We have one word that sums all of those things up, which you well know. So we find ourselves in Acts 1. The former account, Theophilus, which would be the gospel of Luke, was made of all that Jesus began to do and teach till the day he was taken up after he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to whom? Acts 1.2. If we are talking about the who for this passage, who is the who? Who lives in who-ville? Who is the who? Through the Holy Spirit given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen.

It would be interesting if everybody that covers verse 8 would first cover verse 2. To the apostles whom he had chosen. Now, hands up everybody who claims to be an apostle that Jesus has chosen. I'll slap you in the middle of next week, young man.

Where none of us can legitimately claim to be apostles chosen by the Lord Jesus, correct? We may be a lot of things. We have wonderful privileges and benefits. But one thing you are not.

One thing I am not. One thing that should never be on the sign outside of our church, which you can find countless examples of in the northern part of this state and throughout the state that is immediately to our north and elsewhere. The Apostle James Jones.

The Apostle Wilbur Fritzenhammer. People claim to be up there in Pryor. There are two or three churches you drive by pastored by the Apostle somebody or other.

Wrong, wrong, wrong. You're not an apostle. If you claim to be an apostle, you're going to get slapped in turn by the 12 apostles when you arrive in the eternal future.

And they're going to say, here's what you are not. You are not even qualified to slap those who claim to be an apostle because you yourself are not an apostle. This is given to the apostles.

Is that clear? He is speaking through the Holy Spirit, by the way. Why is that included? This is an interesting come to pass. How did Luke know this, by the way? Luke says, hey, Theophilus, which is lover of God, enthusiast for the things of God, Theophilus, Theos, Philos, Delphia, brotherly love.

Well, this is love for God. Not agape love. This is philos.

This is the same love in the vertical that we are called to have in the horizontal. Why does it say through the Holy Spirit gave commandments? Did the Lord Jesus need the Holy Spirit to be able to give commandments to the apostles? No. He's the Lord God.

He's the second person of the Trinity. It isn't like he can't give a commandment unless he's got the Holy Spirit. Why is the Holy Spirit mentioned? These are commandments which will be

executed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

These commandments are given by the Lord Jesus to be executed through the power of, in the presence of, through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Does this help make sense of verse 8? You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will then execute the commands that I have given you. You cannot execute the commands without the power of the Spirit.

There's a great application there for us. If we want to be obedient, if we want to be useful, if we want to be faithful servants, fruitful branches in the vine, we will cultivate and recognize and rely upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit because all of God's commandments are accomplished in the power of God's Spirit. Any part of the commandments of God that you accomplish in the power of the flesh would glorify the flesh.

Look at this flesh. It's fulfilling the commands of God. But when we accomplish God's purposes in the power of God's Spirit, who gets the credit and the glory? God, because it's His command and it's executed in His strength.

This was a point I first grasped fully back in 1986 in Conway, Arkansas, when Bob Thieme came up to a pastor's conference that I attended and was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and rocked my theological world because he had taught, I had learned from my earliest days in Sunday school as a child, that when the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, that God the Father was the first my God, God the Spirit was the second my God, and that the Lord Jesus was forsaken by both of the other members of the Trinity on the cross and in His humanity was therefore alone. Bob said and pointed out from Scripture that you do not accomplish the purposes of God and this highest and greatest purpose and this most prominent and salient act of obedience by any human being that has ever taken place far and away above and beyond anything else you can imagine is the Lord Jesus Christ being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And in His humanity He did not accomplish this in His flesh.

If He did it in His flesh, then the flesh gets the credit. And his whole study from Scripture was pointing out that the Lord Jesus Christ was sustained even in this greatest act of sacrificial obedience to God, out of love for God, in the power of the Spirit. Well, it so struck me that I got up and left.

I didn't even stay for the rest of the conference. I got in my car and went back home and cracked open my Bible and my texts and spent the next couple of weeks processing this profound insight and went back to all the passages and it is true. Nobody does anything in terms of obedience and fulfillment of God's commands apart from God's Holy Spirit.

And that's why God is glorified, because it is in Him and through Him that we accomplish these

things. It is no less true here in Acts chapter 1. Through the Holy Spirit, verse 2. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, verse 8. He is speaking to the apostles whom He had chosen. How many apostles are there that He had chosen present on this occasion? There are exactly 11.

He had 12 disciples, but on this day He had 11 apostles. One of the disciples did not become an apostle. We have the apostle Peter, the apostle James, the apostle John, the apostle Andrew, etc.

We do not have the apostle Judas. Well, we actually do have the apostle Judas, but the other Judas is not an apostle. You know, there were two Judases, two James, and so on.

Two Simons. There were not but one Judas present on this occasion, and it was not the one who betrayed the Lord. He did not become an apostle.

So there are 11 apostles here who receive these words. Where does the 12th apostle come in? You go all the way over to the first place you see more red ink in Acts, which doesn't occur until chapter 9. Chapter 9, verse 4. He's on the road to Damascus. He suddenly sees a light shining around him from heaven, falls to the ground, hears a voice.

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. Trembling and astonished, he says, Lord, what do you want me to do? The Lord said, Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.

That's the short version. If you turn over to Acts chapter 22, if memory serves. Paul is telling the story to his brethren.

22.1. Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now. He is speaking in Hebrew, Aramaic actually. It's the language of the Hebrews at this point.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, brought up in the city of the feet of Gamaliel, etc. Verse 6. He is telling them the story of his commission, not his conversion. His commission.

He is a believer already. It happened as I journeyed and came near Damascus about noon. Suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? I answered, Who are you, Lord? He said to me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting. Those who were with me saw the light, feared, did not hear the voice. Because the voice is speaking to one particular person.

Saul. He is the audience for this, just as the apostles in chapter 1 were the targets for Jesus' words. So I said, What shall I do, Lord? He said to me, Arise, go into Damascus, and you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.

He doesn't say all things which are appointed for believers in me to do. Appointed for you to do. Later on he is warned to get out of Jerusalem.

Flip over a few more pages for the fullest account of the communication. When he is talking to Agrippa in chapter 26, beginning at verse 12. There are three accounts in Acts of the encounter between the Lord Jesus and Saul.

This is the third and the fullest in terms of what Jesus said. Verse 12. Thus occupied, journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priest.

At midday, O King, along the road I saw a light from the heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. When we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying, In the Hebrew language. In the Hebrew language.

In the Aramaic language. I love that. I just pause and dwell on that fact right there.

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goats. Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet.

Watch now. For I have appeared to you for this purpose. To make you a minister and a witness, both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

You, singular. I have appeared to you. What did chapter 1 verse 2 say? The apostles whom he had chosen.

This is Saul becoming an apostle whom he, capital H, had chosen. To be a witness of the things which you have seen and things which I will yet reveal. I will deliver you from the people.

And this is the Jewish people. The word there is legitimately added in italics, the Jewish people. That's when you talk about the people to a Jew, he's thinking of the children of Israel, the people of God.

As well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you. I now apostle you. To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

What is the purpose of the ministry of the apostle Paul? The gospel. And after salvation, what is the goal? To obtain inheritance through faith. Inheritance by faith.

If you are saved, and that's a first class condition, if you are saved, and you are, what is your goal? Is your goal to improve your circumstances as much as possible? Is your goal to line the nest of your retirement near or far down the road? Is it your goal to maximize your relationships? Is it your goal to pass your time in as pleasant and stimulating a fashion as possible? What is your goal? Could you defend your priorities and your goals, if the Lord Jesus Christ was talking to

us the way He's talking to Saul? What is our goal? Having been saved, our goal is to obtain an inheritance by faith among all those who are sanctified. That's our goal. Inheritance.

Preparation for the future. We inherit not only blessings, we inherit not only privileges, but we inherit opportunities. We inherit position for service.

We inherit the ability to be useful to the Master in the ages to come, during the millennium and beyond. We inherit it. We acquire it.

It comes to us by faith. That's the goal of the commission of Saul to us. We are the Gentiles.

And the goal is to obtain an inheritance. So ask yourself, how have I been doing this past couple of days, this past week, this past month? We're three quarters of the way through the year. How am I doing in terms of laying hold of that for which I was laid hold of? An inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith.

This is an ongoing sanctification. Remember, there's three kinds of sanctification. There's our initial sanctification at salvation, where the burden of our guilt and loss in the first Adam is removed.

We are saved. That's our initial sanctification. We are transferred out of darkness into light.

We are gifted. We have between two and three dozen things, depending on how you classify and name them, that happen to us at the point of salvation. And the big word that covers all of that is sanctified.

We are set apart. We now belong to Christ. We belong to God in and through Christ.

That's initial sanctification. Second kind of sanctification, experiential sanctification. We pursue holiness.

Be ye holy for I am holy. Because grace is so great, shall we continue to sin? God forbid. We pursue obedience and righteousness by faith in this life.

Then the third sanctification is ultimate sanctification. When the Lord himself descends from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, we shall all be changed in a moment. And the twinkling of an eye, we will be issued our resurrection body, whether in the ground or standing upon it.

The dead in Christ shall rise first. We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

And we at that point are ultimately sanctified. An inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith. All of those things are contingent upon faith.

We have saving faith. We have living faith. And we have the faith that is motivated by and fueled by hope, looking for and awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But notice, I have appeared to you for this purpose, in verse 16, to make you a minister and a witness. Jesus in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 is talking to the apostles. Now turn back over, keep your finger in Acts 1, but go back over to Matthew 28, which is the other passage OS has already mentioned it here in this chapter.

Chapter 28, this is after the resurrection of the Lord. If your Bible is subtitled as mine is, under chapter 28, He is risen. And you've got your parallels in Mark, Luke and John.

Verse 9, the women worship the risen Lord. Verse 11, the soldiers are bribed to say that the grave was robbed. But now look at verse 16, Matthew chapter 28 verse 16.

What are the first five words there? Then the 11 disciples went. The 11 disciples went into Galilee, the place where Jesus had appointed for them. They saw Him, they worshiped, some doubted.

Jesus came and spoke to them saying, and you have the quote-unquote great commission. To whom is the great commission given? The 11 who went to Galilee. Now did Jesus not appear to upwards of 500 people in one place, according to the account given later by the apostle Paul? 500 people.

Why are these words not spoken on that occasion? These words in Matthew chapter 28 are given to the 11. And they are mirrored in the words given to Saul that we have recorded in the book of Acts. In the book of Acts chapter 1 and verse 8, when Jesus says, You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me.

How many people is He talking to? Eleven. Later on in the book of Acts, He tells Saul, You will be a witness to me. Specific martyre, a word used to exactly 12 men, never given to a group bigger than the apostles.

No place is this given. So what is the basis for the rationale that we're all susceptible and responsible for fulfilling these things? It is based entirely on the continuation in Matthew 28 where He says, Baptizing them, Father, Son, and Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And that this itself is a command, and so if He has given it to them, then they should be teaching others to do exactly the same thing.

Here's the thing. You can be a witness. You go to court and you saw an event take place, and they call you as a witness, you can testify.

Can you teach someone else to be a witness? No. Does Matthew 28 and 19 say, or 20, teach them to tell them that they should teach others to be witnesses? No. It says, teaching them to

observe the commandments I have given you.

Teaching them to observe the commandments I have given you. Not I am giving you, I have given you. Everything that they have been trained and taught in the last three plus years, teach them.

The things you heard in the Sermon on the Mount, the things you heard in the Sermon on the Plain, the things that you have heard in the parables, the things that you have seen demonstrated in the upper room, the Mount of Transfiguration, the calming of the storm, these things that you are witnesses to and that are emphatic reminders and examples of the teaching, you teach others. Why is this particular command only given to the eleven in both occasions? These are a few days apart, the Mount of Olives. And by the way, lest you think that, well, some other people gathered and when you see accounts of the Ascension off the Mount of Olives, if you have seen paintings and so on, there is a big group there, Mary and Martha, there is a big assembled group.

However, continue in chapter 1, look at verse 9. Now, when He had spoken these things, this is Acts 1, verse 9, you shall be witnesses to Me, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. When He had spoken these things, while they watched, and the they is the same they you had in verse 2, He was taken and a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they, the verse 2 apostles, looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, two men stood by them, the same them, in white apparel, who also said, assembled crowd of men and women, assembled people of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, assembled followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, assembled group of five hundred, what does it say? Ye men of Galilee.

You can't say that to an assembled crowd of more than the eleven apostles. The men of Galilee are the eleven. That's who is standing there, that's who has seen the Ascension, the eleven.

It is consistent, it is emphatic, it is well attested here that these words were specifically and for a reason. So I agree with Dr. Hawkins when he says, who is the who here? And it's important for us to recognize that we have not been commissioned as apostles. We can learn from their example, we can benefit from their witness, and they did in fact fulfill these words of the Lord Jesus.

They have been witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and Samaria. The apostle Paul in particular has been a tremendous witness throughout the Gentile world. And you'll notice that in Matthew 28 and in Acts 1, speaking to the first eleven apostles, there is a mention of the nations, right? Make disciples of all the nations, from all the nations.

And it's an interesting Israelite perspective, Hebrew perspective, because how did the people of Israel view those who were not of the people, not the Jewish people? They are looked at in one of two ways. They are either the nations or they are the Gentiles, the uncircumcised. This is the nations.

Make disciples of or from all the nations. But Israel viewed the nations as coming to them. These

are proselytes.

And this is why in the first generation of the church, you have that perspective that, well, everybody thought, well, they really need to keep the law. And you had this real struggle at the Jerusalem council, which is years and years after this. All of the initial believers in Jesus Christ were Jews.

The church began in Jerusalem. The Pentecost happened in Jerusalem. The people who were assembled were largely Jewish.

And there was a big struggle when the apostle Paul came, and they couldn't wrap their mind around the fact that not only would there be proselytes to Judaism that could become Christians, but people who had never come to Judaism, had never recognized the law, had never been under Moses, could jump directly from Gentile to Christian without going through the intermediate route that had existed for centuries of coming to God through Israel. It was a big difficulty. So, say all of that to say this.

When we come to Acts 1, verse 8, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Now, when did this take place? One chapter forward in Acts, Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, they're all gathered in one place. The Holy Spirit descends, right? Is this a picture of these people's salvation? No.

Just like the Damascus Road is not a picture of Saul's salvation. You can call it a conversion in the sense that he's converted from being a dedicated Pharisee to being an apostle, but it's not salvation. If Saul had clutched his chest and had a heart attack and fallen over just as he was leaving town to go to Damascus, where would he be? Lake of Fire or glorified future? Glorified future.

He's a believer. He loves God. He's got a zeal for God.

He enters into the new dispensation. He recognizes Jesus Christ and his transfer from being an Old Testament saint to being a New Testament saint and apostle. But the Pentecost event where the Holy Spirit descends is not salvation.

This is enablement, empowerment. There is a new age. There is a new paradigm.

There is a new purpose of God. There is a new people being called out as body and bride of Christ. And those changes in the plan of God are always marked by a special dispensation of God's grace, marked out many times by miracles, and in this case marked out by something that had not been seen in the earth before, which is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on believers.

You will receive power, verse 8, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you for the purpose of what? Being witnesses. This is why we recognize the apostolic writings as being inspired. This is why we do not recognize the emanations of the Pope in Rome as being inspired.

I have not seen the Holy Spirit descending upon him like a dove. He is not an apostle any more than I am. The apostles were marked out, by the way, all of them had performed miraculous healings and evidences of their divine commission.

Remember that when Jesus sent out the twelve? They came back and they said, we have done these things. We have healed the sick. Later on, some of them are going to raise the dead.

Paul is going to raise the dead. Peter is going to raise the dead. I asked somebody of the Catholic persuasion earlier this week, as I mentioned Friday, when is the last time the Pope did a miracle marking him out as a special messenger of God? I would be happy to acknowledge him if he just shows me that ID card.

Here is the attestation of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit on you in a special way for commissioning as the current messenger of God. The Holy Spirit just isn't there. The puff of smoke coming out the chimney at the Vatican does not an apostle make.

I cannot treat as equal in authority with the Scriptures the words of a guy that got elected on ballots by other guys. I suspect, if anything, the smoke coming out the chimney may drive away the Holy Spirit. It may be everywhere but there for all I know.

But this is the point. It's nothing bad to remember that we are, in fact, witnesses. Our lives, our behavior in this life does shine like light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

That is true. It is true that we have benefited greatly by the fulfillment of these commands to the apostles from the Lord Jesus to teach us, to observe all things that he taught them. That's where our Scriptures come from.

It is excessive, I think, to say that our primary purpose is embodied in Matthew 28, 19 and 20 and in Acts 1-8. The number of imperatives we have, it is as though we're going back and sort of intruding into the group of 11, putting ourselves in there, which automatically de-emphasizes all of the things that Jesus said he gave them to teach. We're supposed to be learning and becoming disciples through all of the other commands that he imparted to them, all of the things that are in our Scriptures.

And instead we say, well, I like that instruction he gave to the apostles. I'm going to concentrate on that. I'm going to try to witness and evangelize and try to bring other people into the kingdom.

And it does not really pertain. My final comment on this goes to the end of the verse. You, 11, shall be witnesses to me.

By the way, this is not an imperative. This is a future. He doesn't say, be witnesses to me.

It's an important distinction. Jesus says, this is what is going to happen. You are going to be

witnesses to me.

It's a done deal. He doesn't say, go become witnesses to me. He doesn't say, you go witness to me.

He doesn't say, witness to me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, etc. He doesn't say that. He says, it is not important for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in his own authority, has set or established in his own authority.

But two things are going to happen. Here's what's going to happen. You are going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

Now, did they have to do anything to receive this power? Is there any imperative here? Be sure and receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Is there any imperative notion in this? No. It's a prediction.

You are going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you are going to be witnesses to me in these places for this duration of time. That's what it says.

Jesus says, look, here's what's coming up. This is what's going to happen. He doesn't say they have to sweat, strain, pray, obey, dunk each other.

All they have to do is wait. These things are going to happen. And the same is true for you and me.

The witness that we bear is not based on us trying to bear a witness. The power that we enjoy from God isn't based on us trying to have the power. It is a simple fact of God's provision.

It is a simple fact of God's plan and program that we are given the power of God's Holy Spirit. And we are witnesses in the way to the people at the time and place of God's choosing. All they had to do was be obedient.

Obedient to what? Remain in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high. That's at the end of the gospel. Remain in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high.

So, I don't quarrel with this presentation of Acts 1-8 as it is traditionally understood. People that want to understand it that way, God bless them. But, I think if you look at it carefully, the emphasis that is so often placed on this as a primary identifying function of the church, we are called, our Bible church in the larger sort of Baptist tradition, is called evangelical Christianity.

We are known as conservative evangelicals. And the church, the Protestant church that focuses on the Bible, has wrapped itself in this mantle. This is our name.

We count ourselves as evangelicals. Our primary function is evangel, the good news. Well, yes, but the good news is everything that's in the New Testament.

The wonderful thing is that the Apostle Paul is the one who has this mission to the Gentiles, teaching them to observe all things. And you saw that expanded in Acts where Jesus says, the things that you have learned and the things that I'm going to reveal to you, you will transmit these to the Gentiles. And this is much more of a meaty commission for Paul, especially in terms of us.

For that reason, we are going to begin this morning without hiatus or intermission our next study in the New Testament, which is going to be the book of Ephesians. And after looking over several candidates, it's become clear to me that the book to do is Ephesians. We've already done Colossians, which is the parallel book.

And so that is the study that we will take up after we pause and take our break.