

God's Equation for the Gospel

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[0 : 00] I'm going to be up front with you.

! Like an attorney. You know, an attorney will stand up and he will try to convince you that in a moment he's going to call for a verdict.

And he's going to try to convince you that the verdict that you're going to give is going to be the verdict that he's trying to persuade you to do.

So I'm just going to tell you up front. We're going to talk about some things this morning, but I'm going to talk to you like a lawyer. And I'm just going to try to persuade you with what I have to say to make a commitment at the close of the service to do something.

And so I'm just giving you fair warning. Now, I realize that, you know, some churches don't even give an invitation anymore. You know, it's kind of outdated, they say.

[1 : 21] You know, well, you know, that's something that started way back with D.L. Moody in the 1800s. Or some would say, well, this started with Billy Sunday and men like that in the early 20th century.

And Billy Graham started. Nobody was doing an invitation before Billy Graham in the late 1940s. Well, I think if you go to Scripture, it's pretty easy to see that not too very far in the book of Genesis. You have God giving an invitation to Noah and his family to do what? To come on the ark. Well, you read throughout Scripture.

You get over into the New Testament. You don't have to read very far in the New Testament before you find Jesus giving an invitation to the lame man to do what?

Take up his bed. Or the man that was covered with a sword to stretch out his hand. Well, you can go all the way over even into the last book of the New Testament into Revelation.

[2 : 26] The last chapter, you come up about four verses from the end of that last chapter. And it says, the spirit and the bride say come. So you don't have to look very far through Scripture to find that the invitation is not something that man started.

The invitation has been on the heart of God since before the beginning of time. So I'm going to try to persuade you for something here. We're going to look at that. We're going to talk about that. And so this morning, you know, I'm not much at titles. You know, I always give a title to a message. And when I get through the message, people scratch their head and say, well, what did that have to do with what he's saying? But if I had to title this message, I would simply say that the message this morning deals with God's equation to the gospel.

God's equation for the gospel. And we see there are three times in Scripture that God gives us a command.

[3 : 30] Matthew 28 and 19. And he gives us the command to do what? To go to do what? To make disciples. And that was given just shortly before our Lord was crucified.

Well, you turn a few pages over into Mark chapter 16 and verse 15. And he tells us again that we are to make disciples, to go to make disciples.

And he gives us that just shortly before he was ascended to the right hand of the Father. Just shortly after the resurrection, rather. And then in Acts chapter 1 and verse 7 and 8, in the verse of Scripture that we all know very well.

You should be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You should be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. And he gave that just shortly before he was resurrected to the right hand of the Father.

And so, you know, the Lord tells us three times he gives us a command. And so the message this morning, God's command and our obedience to that command equals the salvation of the lost.

[4 : 47] Now, I'll tell you, I'm not real strong on equations. When I was in high school, anybody here, do we have any freshmen in the building today?

Well, we may not have any freshmen, but everybody else, if you're older than a freshman, you took algebra in high school. Yeah? Come on. How many of you took algebra? All right. I bet you didn't do it the way I did it.

I thought $A + B = C$. Where in the world is that going to get you in life? And so I came up at the end of my freshman first semester, and I was failing algebra one.

Well, I went up to my teacher after class was over, and he was sitting there grading papers. And, you know, he never even looked up.

He said, yeah, hand, what do you want? And I said, Mr. Jackson, I'm failing your class. And you know what? He never even looked in his grade book. But he said, yeah, you are.

[5 : 52] I said, is there anything I can do to pass this course? Never looked up. He's still grading papers. He said, hand, I'll make a deal with you. If you promise not to sign up for second semester, I'll pass you first semester.

Now, that's a deal. Well, I thought, okay, great. Well, I still had to have math. So second semester, I took business math.

Well, that made sense. You know, $\$1 + \$1 = \$2$. That made a lot of sense. But $A + B = C$ made absolutely no sense to me. And, of course, it came back to haunt me when my kids were in high school, junior high and high school.

And I could sure help them balance a mean checkbook. But I couldn't help them without you. Well, you know, when I think about that equation that I just mentioned a moment ago, you know, it really comes into sharper view.

When you realize that on October the 31st, 2011, the United Nations released the figures that there are now officially over 7 billion people that live on this planet.

[7 : 03] Now, let me help you to understand. That's not 7M million. That's 7B billion people. And of that 7 billion, statistics show that 2 billion of those have little to no access to the gospel whatsoever.

Now, let me see if I can help you to understand what that means. You go home this afternoon and after lunch, you get you a nice tall glass of tea and go find your favorite chair in the den and just lean your head back and just say, Look, I'm going to do something this afternoon.

Just don't bother me. If anybody calls, just take a message. I'll call them back. But I'm going to count to a billion. Just one number per second until I get there. Without stopping, no interruption.

I'm just going to count to a billion. One, two, three, four, five. Well, before you get started, pull your calculator out.

Figure 60 seconds to the minute, 60 minutes to the hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. And you're going to realize something.

[8 : 14] That is that it's going to take you to count from one to a billion at one number per second. Without stopping, it's going to take you slightly less than 32 years to get there.

And we have twice that many that have little to no access to the gospel whatsoever. When I was in college, way back 100 years ago, it seems like, I had a young man that I met.

His name was Solomon Owalabi from Nigeria. And his father was one of the ruling chiefs in Nigeria. And, in fact, they don't do this any longer, but they did it when he was born in the mid-40s.

Royalty, they would take a razor and they would slash the chief of the royalty. And so Solomon had three scars.

One, two, three, and he had three on this side. One, two, three scars. And these scars were probably, I would guess, you know, they're probably a quarter of an inch wide.

[9 : 34] Maybe not that much, but certainly evident enough that you could see them. And his family worshipped their god, which was sacrificing a chicken on a rock out in their front yard.

They wanted their son to be educated. And so they sent him to the mission school to be educated. And they said, now, the white man will try to get you to believe in his God.

But this is our God. And so he went to the mission school and accepted the white man's God. And came to the States and was educated and went to seminary and went back to Nigeria and pastors the church in Nigeria and has taken the gospel to his people.

I've been in Africa on four different occasions. And let me just tell you, we see a lot on the news about the Muslims and the, we see the radical side of it.

Let me just tell you, that is not the true picture of Muslim. That is an element of it, but it is not a true representation of all of the Muslim.

[11 : 01] Look, they're not, they're not distant to the gospel. They're not defiant to the gospel. They just don't know the gospel. They just don't know it. And IMB will tell you that they have reports that more than 4,000 Muslims per day are coming to Christ.

Because someone has taken the gospel to them. Somebody is telling them. They're not defiant. They're not distant to it. They just don't know it. And so as we look at this equation that we're talking about here.

And that is God's obedience. I'm sorry, God's command plus our obedience to that command equals the salvation of the lost. Well, when you realize that, well, what does that mean for the church in 2018?

What does that mean for the church? And by the way, who is the church? Anybody know? I mean, is it this beautiful facility here?

The four walls, the roof, the floor? Is that the church? No. Who is the church? We are the church. This just happens to be a beautiful facility that the church meets in.

[12 : 22] But we are the church. You know, the Great Commission wasn't given to a board or given to an agency. But it was given to the church.

And so when the Lord tells us three times in Matthew 28, Mark chapter 16, Acts chapter 1, when the Lord gives us that command to make disciples, he's given that to his church.

He's given that to us. And so we look at that and realize that there is a mandate, if you will.

And what is a mandate? Well, a mandate is when one in supreme authority gives a mandate is when they give something to a subordinate to do.

Well, you have to, you certainly have to believe that the supreme God who has told each of us three times in scripture to make disciples, you certainly have to look at that as his mandate to us in sharing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13 : 32] So what does that mean for us, the church? Well, I'm going to, very quickly, I'm going to rush through four points to get to the fifth point, and then we're going to be done, okay? So, point number one, and what does that mean for us?

Well, let's look at, let's call it perspectives, if you will. And perspective number one is that contrary to what man might think, all persons everywhere know of the existence of God.

I told you about Solomon a moment ago. You know, here was Solomon's family who said, that's the white man's God, but this is our God here. This rock that we sacrifice the chicken to, that's our God. All men everywhere, all men everywhere knows of the existence of God. Now, convoluted as it may be, they still understand the existence of God.

Scripture tells us that in Romans chapter 1 and verse 20 and verse 21. And it tells us essentially that basically that the heavens and the earth and the things that God has created tell us that there is God.

[14 : 48] And so, because of that, because of what he has eternally made, it goes on to say that man is without excuse. Well, what about the Asians?

What about the Hindus in their country? What about the Buddhists in their country? What about the Muslims in their countries where they are?

There again, convoluted as it may be, they all understand that there is a God, but they don't understand who the true God is.

So, point number one is, man everywhere understands and believes that there is a God. But that's not enough. Now, perspective number two says that contrary to what people might think, all people have a sin nature.

You know, I said a moment ago that I flew a million miles with Delta Airlines. So, I've seen a lot of country. I've seen a lot of beautiful things that God has made.

[16 : 02] And by the way, man, I thought I'd seen everything until I saw Mount McKinley. I don't know that I've seen anything as beautiful as Mount McKinley.

But the problem we have today with people is, they don't question Mount McKinley or the Rocky Mountains or the Grand Canyon.

They don't question the things that God has made. In fact, they worship the things that God has made. They just don't worship God. They worship the creation, but they don't worship the creator. And it is the sin nature of man that puts something between us, between man and between God. And in this case, it is worshiping what God has created, but not worshiping God.

We have a partnership in Edmonton. A recent survey. Under the box, it says religion.

[17 : 13] The box that was checked the most in a recent survey was the box that said no religion. Over a million people live in Edmonton, Alberta, and less than 2% of all denominations.

Less than 2% are doing what you're doing this morning and sitting in God's house. And that's of all denominations. Not just Baptist.

That's of all denominations. So perspective number two would tell us that contrary to what man might think, man has the sin nature.

Perspective number three says, contrary to what man might think, there are no innocent people in this world. Romans chapter 3, verse 23, you know the scripture, I'm sure, very well, says for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Somebody says, oh, but wait, what about that man that's in the deepest, darkest part of Africa that's never heard the gospel before?

[18 : 28] In fact, I sat with a man in Colorado not long ago. And he looked at me across the table and he said, come on, Mike, he said, surely, surely that innocent man, and that's, these are his words, in that deepest, dark place in Africa that's never heard the gospel, surely that man, surely God's not going to send him to hell, that innocent man.

And pastor, I looked at him and I said, you know what? You're exactly right. You are exactly right. But, there's a problem with that. And he said, well, what's that? I said, if you can find that innocent man, you're exactly right.

But the problem with that is, you're not going to find that innocent man. Because the Bible tells us, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

That means I have. I looked at him. I said, that means that you have. That means that your next door neighbor has. That person that you work with. That student that you go to school with.

[19 : 41] That family member that you have. That means even that guy in the deepest, darkest part of Africa can't escape from the fact that he's not innocent.

And by the way, we don't get on a plane and go to the other side of the world to share the gospel with people because if we don't tell them, who's going to tell them?

That's our responsibility to do right here at home. What about that person you work with? What about that next door neighbor? What about that person that you would say, you know, I know everything about my next door neighbor.

I know where he works. I know where his favorite vacation place is. I know what his favorite sports team is. I can tell you how long he's been married. I know exactly how long we've lived next door to each other.

But I've never asked him about his spiritual condition. That's our responsibility. The Great Commission wasn't given to a board or an agency.

[20 : 57] The Great Commission was given to the church. We are the church. And it's not just to get on a plane to go to Latvia or get on a plane and go to Edmonton or get on a plane and go to Guerrero or West Africa or wherever the case may be because they need to hear the gospel.

Folks, I'm... We got folks right here in Bartlesville, USA that need to hear the gospel. You have family members that need to hear the gospel.

You have students that you go to school with that need to hear the gospel. And if... Who's going to tell them if we don't? And so perspective number four tells us that contrary to what man might believe God made a way of salvation through the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You know, last Sunday was Easter and I'm sure that you were like many churches you had more people here last Sunday than you have here this Sunday. And they heard the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But you know, for us as a believer, that's just not... That is not just something we believe one week out of the year. That's something we believe 52 weeks out of the year.

[22 : 23] And sad to say, in Bartlesville and in Oklahoma City and in 45,000 Southern Baptist churches across the United States, we've all got less in attendance today than we had last Sunday.

But there are folks who are no less not saved today than there were last Sunday. So we have that responsibility to take the gospel right here in our own Jerusalem because if we don't do it, who's going to do it?

And when you realize that contrary to what people believe, might believe, God did make a way for a person to know that when they die that they'd go to heaven.

You know, we're not saved because Jesus was humiliated, though he was. Though he was. And we're not saved because he was arrested, though he was. We're not saved because he was humiliated, though he was. But we're saved because of the fact of his death, his burial, and his resurrection.

[23 : 38] His death on the cross. He shed blood for us. His death from that, his burial, and then his resurrection. That's, that's, that's what salvation is.

And when we put our faith, our trust in that, the best news that you could ever hear. And we have folks in Bartlesville, USA that need to hear that as well as on the other side of the world.

And that's part of that equation. God's command, I guess it ought to be this way. God's command plus our obedience to that command equals the salvation of the lost.

And that brings us to the fifth point. And I've rushed through everything I've said so far to get to this last point. And that is, very simply, that contrary to what people might think, Christ commands us, his church, he commands us to take the gospel to the nations.

Jesus. I sat with a pastor in Nevada. If you ever go there, don't say Nevada.

[24 : 55] That's not right. They'll look at you funny. Nevada. I sat with a pastor in Nevada. And the state exec for that state convention, I was in town for the weekend and he said, if I could arrange for you to speak in one of our key churches in our association here, would you do that?

And I said, yeah, I'd be glad to. Well, he called me back later in the afternoon and he said, yeah, he said he'd like to have you and ask if you could be there at 10 o'clock Sunday morning. And I said, I'll be there. Well, I show up at 10 o'clock and pastor kind of like you and I met this morning and we just kind of get to know each other and a little bit about my family and a little bit about his and share a cup of coffee with each other.

And finally, after about 15 minutes, you know, we both kind of stopped, took a breath and he looked at me and he said, you know, I don't get the connection.

He said, now you're here today. I'm glad you're here and so-and-so called me and asked if I would, like to have you come and I'm glad you're here but, you know, I'll be honest, I don't, I don't get the connection.

He said, I'm the local church and you're the International Mission Board. He said, I don't, I don't get the connection. Folks, I'm sorry.

[26 : 21] I'm a little slow but I thought he was pulling my leg and then I realized that he's got this look on his face like, I'm serious.

I'm not, I'm not making a joke here. I'm, I'm serious and so I said, well, let me see if I can answer that question with a question. He said, okay. I said, you tell me to whom was the Great Commission given?

Well, let me tell you something. He looks at me now like, I know this is a trick question. I know I'm not going to get it right. And I said, not a trick question.

You just tell me to whom did our Lord give His Great Commission? And now he looked at me like, he kind of turned his head and kind of looked with one eye like, man, I sure hope I get this right. It's probably a trick question. I'm probably going to get it wrong. I sure hope I get it right. So he turns and looks at me out of one eye and said, the church?

[27 : 29] I said, that's it. The church. The Great Commission wasn't given to a board or an agency. The Great Commission was given to us. His church. Oh, I get it.

I understand. I get it. Yeah, that makes sense. Well, I'm seven years down the road, six or seven years down the road since we had that conversation and they're not doing any more now than what they were doing six or seven years ago, so I'm not sure that he really did get it.

But it's probably easier to tell you what the Great, it's probably easier to tell you what the Great Commission is than it is to tell you what it's not.

The Great Commission, first of all, it is the Great Commission. It's not the Great Suggestion, as somebody said one time. I know many of you will know the name Hudson Taylor.

Hudson Taylor was the founder of China Inland Mission back during the turn of the 20th century, late 1800s.

[28 : 37] And Hudson Taylor, talking about the Great Commission, made a statement one time. He said that the Great Commission was not an option to be considered but was a command to be obeyed.

And I've said it three times or twice already, I'm about to say a third time, but Jerry Rankin made the statement that the Great Commission wasn't speaking of the International Mission Board. He said the Great Commission wasn't given to a board or an agency, but it was given to the church. You know, sometimes we think of our International Mission Board and we say, well, yeah, those folks out in Richmond, we give to the cooperative program and we give to missions so they can go do missions.

Well, that is, that is true. And I do have a son and a daughter-in-law and three grandkids in the Middle East and I do thank you for your giving to the cooperative program and for what you do for Lottie Moon and in the state of Oklahoma, what you do for Edna McMillan and that state mission offering and I know that OBU and our children's homes and our crisis pregnancy centers and our various directors of missions around the state, I know they appreciate what you do and what you give, but it's not, it's not one or the other, it's both.

We have a responsibility to take the gospel right here in Bartlesville, USA as much as we have to take the gospel to that person on the other side of the world, to that family member, to that person you work with, to that schoolmate, to that person you sit across the cubicle, across the desk from at work because folks, if we don't tell them, who's going to tell them?

[30 : 35] Who's going to tell them? And I think probably if you look at Romans chapter 10 and verses 13, 14, and 15, I think Paul sums it up far better than Jerry Rankin could ever say, far better than Hudson Taylor could ever say when he said in verse 13, 14, and 15, and actually we're going to look at verse 15 and read backwards, 15, 14, 13.

And Paul writes, and he says, And how are they to preach unless they be sent? Well then, he says here in verse 14, And how then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe on him in whom they've never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And then he says, For whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Or will be saved. And church, let me just tell you, that's God's plan and that has been God's plan for over 2,000 years.

His plan for taking his gospel has been us. Has been us. So the issue here this morning as we bring this to a close, the issue here is, you know, it's not, it's not about that man in the deepest, darkest part of Africa.

[32 : 26] It's really not. It's really not. The issue here this morning is, what are you and I, me, what are we going to do about that man in the deepest, darkest part of Africa?

what are you going to do about that next door neighbor, about that person that you work with, that family member, that schoolmate, that associate?

That's the question. What are you going to do about that? What am I going to do about that? What am I going to do about my next door neighbors and my family members?

What am I going to do about that? That's the question here. It's not about the man in the deepest, darkest part of Africa. The question here is, what are we going to do about that man in the deepest, darkest part of Africa?

Yes, but what are we going to do about those folks right here in Bartlesville, USA? I know that you've heard this many times as I've heard it.

[33 : 49] And that someone would say, well, I'm just trying to find God's will. I'm just looking for God's will for my life.

Well, I got good news. You can quit looking. It's not lost. Because the Lord tells us in His Word in 2 Peter, He says, God is not willing that any should perish.

That's His will. He's not willing that any should perish. will. So, is it your will that you talk to that next door neighbor? Absolutely. Is it God's will that you talk to that person you work with?

Absolutely. Is it God's will that you share the gospel with that family member? Absolutely. Is it God's will that you, if you have an opportunity to go on the other side of the world and tell that person about the Lord?

Is that His will? Absolutely. God is not willing that any should perish. I like what Ed Stetzer said.

[35 : 07] Ed says that if we as Christians, if we could just get to the place in our lives, that we would just simply lay our eyes on the table and let God pick it up and put it on a map.

Wow, what a great thing that would be. Well, I told you in the beginning of the message that I was going to talk to you like your lawyer on trying to solicit a verdict here.

And it's the verdict time. It really is. It's the verdict time. And so in these next couple of minutes before we close, I'm going to ask you, if you would, to just bow your head. And nobody looking except me. And I'm going to ask just a simple question. And that is, how many of you would say, you know, if the Lord will show me what it is that he wants me to do in this area of taking the gospel, be it in Bartlesville, be it on the other side of the world, but if God will show me who it is that he wants me to take the gospel to, if he'll reveal that to me, I'd be willing to do that. I'm going to ask you if you would just simply say, if God will show me what he wants me to do, I will be willing to do what it is that he wants me to do. If you would say that, could you raise your hand to that?

[36 : 59] Okay, yeah, yeah, thank you. And again, you know, God doesn't call everyone like my son and daughter-in-law and my three grandkids, God doesn't call everyone to be a career missionary.

But he does call us all to be missionaries. He does call us all to take the gospel. Thank you.