

# Mission: A Duty or a Privilege

**Scripture** Matthew 28:16–20

**Key Verse** “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28:19)

**Objectives**

- Understand that mission is not a burdensome obligation, but a precious privilege given to all saints called by God.
- Make a commitment to embrace this privilege in daily life.



## I. Sharing Thoughts

1. What are some things that Christian missionaries worldwide have done up to now?
2. When you hear the word *mission*, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?



## II. Expanding Thoughts

### 1. The Great Commission of Jesus

Matthew 28 explains the command that the resurrected Jesus gave to the eleven disciples, commonly known as the “Great Commission.” The Great Commission is regarded as the highest command, akin to the farewell discourse Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension; it is a command that must be obeyed. Specifically, in Matthew 28:19–20, the command is introduced: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” The subsequent instructions, such as “baptizing them” and “teaching them to obey,” can be understood as practical guidelines for making disciples. In the original text, the main verb is “make disciples,” and the rest are all participial forms.

The Great Commission given by the resurrected Jesus provides an important foundation for why we should engage in missions. It is his request, plea, and command after saving us through the cross and giving us new life. Specifically, the command to go to “all nations” means we need to reach out to people beyond our lingual and cultural



context. While the traditional missionary paradigm of having to physically go to other countries is changing due to advancements in technology and communication, what remains unchanged is the imperative that we must go, whether it is across the street or across the sea. This is because the target for making disciples is there. An important fact to remember when moving forward to make disciples is that Jesus, who has received all authority in heaven and on earth, is with us: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). This fact empowers us to approach others with boldness when carrying the gospel to them.

When contemplating missions, in addition to remembering Jesus’ Great Commission recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, we should also consider the words found in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” In this verse, the expression “to the ends of the earth” corresponds to the “all nations” mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew. The ends of the earth may refer to places that can be reached by boat or plane, but it can also symbolize the empty hearts of those who do not know Jesus. It means that even the person right next to us could be considered the ends of the earth. Here, Jesus gives the disciples the promise of making them his witnesses. It involves the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). The disciples will receive not the water baptism that John administered, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit, empowering them to boldly go to the ends of the earth as witnesses of the Lord.

## 2. Calling

One important fact to note in Jesus’ Great Commission is that the ones receiving this command were not the general public but Jesus’ disciples. The most crucial qualification of disciples is that they have been called by Jesus. Whether by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, along the road, or in the places where Jesus stayed, he called people and chose them to be his disciples. Jesus not only called these chosen disciples but also gave them a mission and issued commands. When discussing missions, it is essential to remember that the primary aspect is the calling.

The lives of saints (Christians) are composed of the beautiful harmony between calling and mission. Within the grand calling of making us children of God through Jesus Christ, there exist individual calls directed toward each of us. Each call contains an assignment (mission), and at the core of each saint’s given assignment is the work of missions. An illuminating verse that depicts the relationship between this calling and missions is found in 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” The apostle Peter explains that the reason God called us is for the declaration of praise. The act of declaring praise is one of the various missions works we engage in, ultimately revealing that the most significant reason God called us is for the purpose of missions.



The significance of calling is clear within the definition of the church, the gathering of saints. The church is a congregation of the called. The Greek word for the church, *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία), is a compound of *ek* (out) and *kaleo* (to call), and the early church saints used this term to best express their identity. The apostle Paul also emphasizes this fact in his letters. “God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). The powerful driving force that guided Paul throughout his entire life was also the calling of God.

The church was not only a gathering of the called but also a community of apostles (*apostolos*) who were sent out into the world with the command to go. Originally, the term *apostolos* referred to a fleet with a military purpose sailing the seas or an envoy performing diplomatic missions. Their mission was to follow and execute the orders of the government or commander who sent them. They were not individuals acting with personal motives or intentions. In the early church, various ministers, including the disciples of Jesus and Paul, were called apostles. Now, we too have been called as apostles to bear the mission of witnessing. We are apostles of God who called us, entrusting us with a special mission, namely, the mission of spreading the gospel.

Commands tend to come as obligations to everyone. Therefore, many saints who perceive missions as a command may feel a considerable burden. However, looking at missions from the perspective of calling can provide a different understanding. This is because a calling is a privilege, and a privilege is something that we can enjoy and use freely. The Lord who called us has also promised that he will be present and that we will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He has given us the ability to enjoy the privilege. Yes, mission is a command from the Lord, but it is a special command given only to those who are called by the Lord. Therefore, as we deeply understand and feel the meaning of calling, Christians should approach missions not as a duty to be reluctantly fulfilled but as a privilege to be enjoyed with gratitude. The burden will decrease, and the passion will increase. We are not able to do it on our own, but with the help of the Holy Spirit who is with us, we can handle it abundantly. Let’s remember that the beginning of missions is not a command but a calling.

### 3. A Missionary Called

In 2001, a retirement ceremony was held for an American missionary in the small Central African country of Burundi. She and her husband had gone to Africa in the early 1940s and had been engaged in missionary work in various countries in the surrounding region for about sixty years. As the celebration unfolded, with many fellow missionaries and local residents filling the venue, a Korean missionary translated and sang a blessing song in the local language, saying, “You were born to be loved.” Her husband had passed away a few months earlier after a lifetime of serving together. Their children continued the missionary work in a nearby country, and their grandchildren had multiplied, forming a large family.



During the ceremony, the most impressive moment was when locally adopted granddaughters presented a carefully prepared bouquet to their grandmother. The frail elderly missionary, holding up the microphone, began her testimony by expressing gratitude to the many people who had been with her. She spoke about her thankfulness for growing up in a faithful home, receiving a calling in her youth, meeting her husband who shared the same calling, and facing numerous crises and challenges in Africa. She shared these experiences calmly, but her voice trembled a few times. Perhaps she was overwhelmed by the memories of the passing years.

The last sentence she spoke resonated deeply with the crowd, causing everyone's hearts to stir and heads to nod in agreement: "God does not call the qualified. He qualifies the called."



### III. *Living Thoughts*

1. Knowing that the calling God has for us is a privilege, what are the practical differences between realizing this privilege and questioning it?
2. What are some specific tasks in your daily life in which you can obey the Lord's command?

