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Series: The Great Commission

# The Great Commission (6)

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Matthew 28:16-20

(Continuation from 10/07/12)

## The Making Disciples of All Nations, Part 1

### Burden for the Lost

**2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup>Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

The overarching reason Paul defended his integrity, the one that incorporated all the rest, was so that he could continue to reach the lost. He passionately longed to see people come to saving faith in Christ. In the pagan cultural center of Athens, for example, Paul found that **“his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols”** ([Acts 17:16](#)).

**Acts 17:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup>Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

To the Romans he wrote, **“I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles”** ([Romans 1:13](#)). In his first inspired letter to them, Paul made it clear to the Corinthians that his mission was **“to preach the gospel”** ([1 Corinthians 1:17](#)); in fact, as he wrote later in that epistle, **“I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel”** ([1 Corinthians 9:16](#)).

But perhaps the most poignant glimpse of Paul’s burden for the lost comes in a shocking statement in his letter to the Romans:

**Romans 9:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

<sup>2</sup>that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

<sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

So intense was the apostle’s desire to see his lost fellow Israelites saved that he was willing to forfeit, were that possible, his own salvation to bring that about. Not surprisingly, his constant **“desire and... prayer to God for them [was] for their salvation”** ([Rom. 10:1](#)).

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**Romans 10:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

Paul's burden for the lost moved him to defend his integrity, lest he lose his credibility and with it his ability to effectively preach the gospel.

These two verses define when Paul's burden for the lost began.

**2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

The conjunction *hōste* (therefore) points back to [verses 14](#) and [15](#), which describe salvation.

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

<sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

After his conversion, the way Paul viewed people changed radically. From then on, he did not recognize (*oida*; lit. "know," or "perceive") anyone **according to the flesh**; he no longer evaluated people based on external, worldly standards, as the false teachers did (cf. [2 Corinthians 5:12](#); [Galatians 6:12](#)).

**2 Corinthians 5:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.

**Galatians 6:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

The proud Pharisee, who once scorned Gentiles, and even those Jews outside of his group (cf. [John 7:49](#)), now looked beyond mere outward appearances.

**John 7:49 (NASB)**

<sup>49</sup> "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

His prejudice and hatred gave way to a love for all, including "Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman" ([Col. 3:11](#)).

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**Colossians 3:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> ***a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.***

Not only did Paul's view of people change but also his view of **Christ**. He had once **known Him according to the flesh**; he had made a human assessment of Him, concluding that He was merely a man. Worse, he had decided Jesus was a false messiah; a heretic and a rebel against Judaism; one worthy of death. As a result, Paul dedicated his life to persecuting His followers. As he later confessed,

So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. ([Acts 26:9-11](#))

**Acts 26:9-11 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> **"So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.**

<sup>10</sup> **"And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.**

<sup>11</sup> **"And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.**

**Yet** after his conversion Paul knew **Him in this way no longer**. The assessment of Paul the apostle was radically different than that of Saul the Pharisee. No longer did he view Jesus as an itinerant Galilean rabbi and self-appointed messianic impostor who was the enemy of Judaism. Instead, he saw Him for who He really is, God incarnate, the Savior, and the Lord of heaven, the true Messiah who alone fulfills all Old Testament promises and provides forgiveness for sin. The transformation in Paul's view took place in one blinding moment when he met the risen Lord on the road to Damascus. And when his assessment of Jesus changed, so did his assessment of everyone else. He knew that the same profound change that took place in his life would take place in the lives of all those who put their faith in Christ.

**Therefore**, in a conclusion also deriving from [verse 15](#), Paul wrote, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature.**

**2 Corinthians 5:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.**

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**2 Corinthians 5:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

God's grace and mercy are wide enough to encompass anyone, even the most vile, wicked sinner—even the foremost of sinners ([1 Tim. 1:15-16](#)).

**1 Timothy 1:15-16 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*.

<sup>16</sup> Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

But God is only “the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” ([Romans 3:26](#); cf. [Galatians 3:26](#)).

**Romans 3:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**Galatians 3:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. His substitutionary death becomes their death, and His resurrection life their life.

The familiar Pauline expression **in Christ** succinctly and profoundly summarizes all the rich blessings of salvation (cf. [Rom. 8:1](#); [16:3, 7](#); [1 Cor. 1:30](#); [Gal. 3:28](#); [Eph. 1:1](#); [Phil. 1:1](#); [4:21](#); [Col. 1:2, 28](#); [Philem. 23](#)).

Everyone who is **in Christ** becomes a new creature (cf. [Gal. 6:15](#)).

**Galatians 6:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

*Kainos* (new) means new in quality, not just in sequence; believers’ “old self was crucified with Him” ([Romans 6:6](#));

**Romans 6:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

they have therefore laid “aside the old self... and put on the new self” ([Eph. 4:22, 24](#); [Col. 3:9-10](#)).

**Ephesians 4:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

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**Ephesians 4:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> **and put on the new self**, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

**Colossians 3:9-10 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self** with its *evil* practices,

<sup>10</sup> **and have put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

The transformation wrought by the new birth is not only an instantaneous miracle but also a lifelong process of sanctification. For those so transformed, everything changes; **the old things** have **passed away**. Old values, ideas, plans, loves, desires, and beliefs vanish, replaced by the **new things** that accompany salvation.

**2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore from now on we recognize **no one according to the flesh**; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things **have come**.

The perfect tense of the verb *ginomai* (**have come**) indicates a past act with continuing results in the present. God plants new desires, loves, inclinations, and truths in the redeemed, so that they live in the midst of the old creation with a new creation perspective (cf. **Galatians 6:14**).

**Galatians 6:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

That perspective, as it is nourished and developed, helps believers gain victory in the battle against sin and conforms them to the image of Jesus Christ.

So Paul defended his integrity in order to preach with boldness, knowing that he was trusted. In addition, his reverence and gratitude to the Savior who had done so much for him, his deep concern for the church, and passionate devotion to the truth, desire for righteousness, and longing to see the lost come to the Savior compelled him to maintain his integrity. Because he did so, he could confidently challenge the Corinthians,

**1 Corinthians 4:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.