

Two Passions to Live and Die For

Romans 9:1-3

Pre-Introduction:

Good morning, everybody! We are going to be taking a small break from our God of Miracles book but today's message is still related to our God of Miracles series. So, to start it off, we actually have a video from one of our faithful congregants who wants to share a little bit of the miracles that she witnessed God do in Japan.

Introduction:

- 1) If you need a Bible for this service raise your hand, we are going to be in Romans 9:1-5.
- 2) Make a comment on the video w/ Sara Jane.
- 3) Please say a prayer for our pastors in Mexico city.
 - Sometimes, pastoral ministry, and really any leadership position, can be lonely at times. According to Barna, 65% of pastors feel lonely and isolated. Please pray for our pastors that this year's gathering will be more encouraging than they could ever ask or imagine because this is our mission with the Awaken Church Communities: **Building a community of unified churches working together to make disciples of Jesus from all peoples through a global church planting movement.**

Stand with me today if you are able – we stand out of reverence and respect to the word of God.

Question of Reflection:

Everyone is gripped by something... the question is: **what passion grips you the most? Is this passion strong enough for you live for and to die for?**

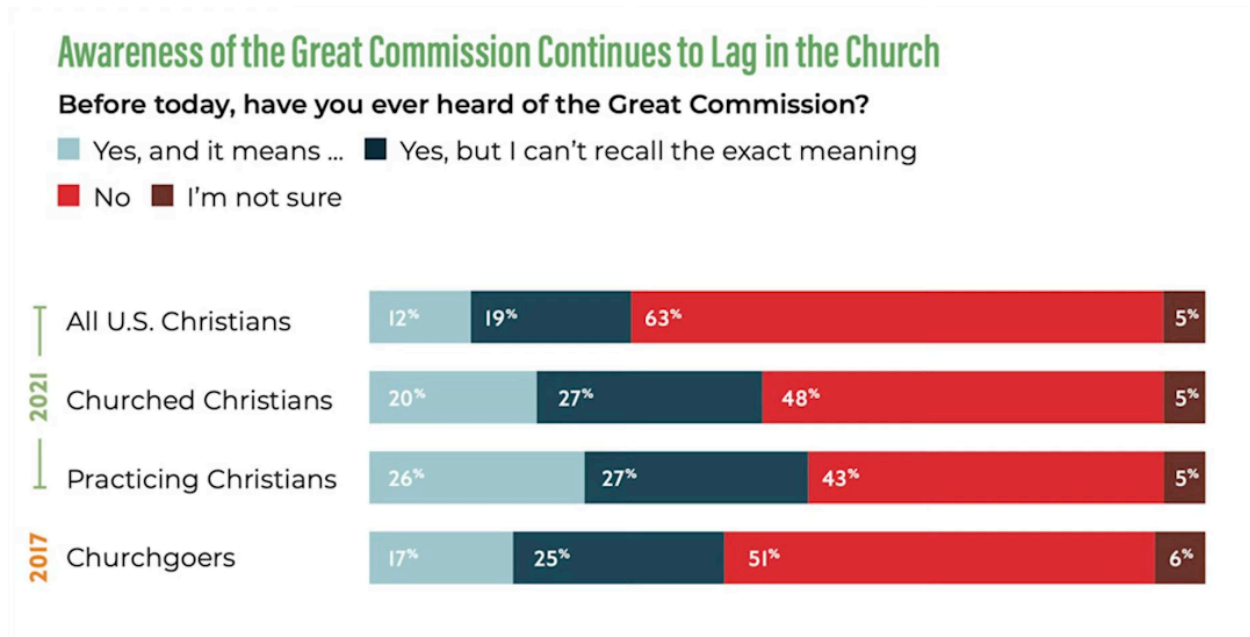
- Some people would probably live and die for success and achievement. People today definitely live and die for money and security. Some people live and die for love and relationships, a life of pleasure and entertainment, power and influence, and for some they live and die for their faith in God.

My main idea for this morning is that there are two passions that should completely grip you: a passion to glorify God, and a passion to see sinners saved.

Background Context:

To get to this place where you naturally embody these passions, you must have a theological conviction to understanding the importance of fulfilling your role in the Great Commission.

- Show Barna study graphic on how knowledgeable people are about the Great Commission. (please put this graphic below into the slides)



The Great Commission is a calling for every single follower of Jesus. This is also a commandment for every single follower of Jesus.

I know that the majority of us have heard about “The Great Commission,” but today I want to continue to strengthen your theological conviction on why these final words of Jesus have such a heavy meaning and how we can play our part in our day-to-day life.

Jesus gives the Commission to us five different times:

- 1) Mark 16:15-20 “Preaching the Gospel to All Nations”
- 2) Luke 24:46-48 “Defining the Gospel to All Nations”
- 3) Matthew 28:16-20 “Making Disciples of All Nations”
- 4) John 20:21 “Revealing the Heart of the Father to All Nations”
- 5) Acts 1:4-11 “Receiving the Power to Being a Witness of Jesus to All Nations”

We don't have the time to read all of these passages so for time's sake I'm going to quote these verses but I also just want to give you space to open up the Word of God for yourself and test me and see if I'm crazy. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you and minister to you and ask yourself, Jesus is this my calling? Is this a calling for all Christians or is this a calling for a specific group of

Christians that we call missionaries? I said it before but I'll answer the question right now because I have grown in my theological conviction, this is a calling – a commandment to every single follower of Jesus. We are all commanded and called to preach the Gospel to all nations. We are all called to care about the unsaved world and pray about what's my role in that?

We see the apostles being commissioned five different times.

- In Mark we see we are to preach and proclaim the Gospel into every soul, every creature of the entire world.
- Luke then defines more specifically what is it to preach the Gospel. There are many different gospels, Paul says in Galatians don't believe those preaching a different gospel, but there is only one true gospel. So, Luke defines it for us. Preach the repentance and remission of sin. Preach that Christ suffered and was crucified on the cross but rose again three days later so that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations. Forgiveness cannot come unless there is a true repentance from sin.
- Matthew tells us we have the authority of the Holy Spirit to GO and MAKE not converts to Christianity, but DISCIPLES, followers, imitators of Jesus baptizing them but also teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded us!

Jesus' main ministry was to reveal the Father to the whole world.

- All throughout the book of John, you see Jesus parading the name of the Father and in John 17, Jesus was sent to the world so that He would send His people to give to the world the Good News of the Gospel.

Then in Acts, we see Jesus' final, final words as He is ascending into heaven. (Make this final one more playful and illustrative)

- Read Acts: 1-8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- Jesus is literally standing on the mount of olives talking to the disciples, and the first thing that you see standing on the mount of olives is the temple that is right in front of you. Then He says you're going to be a witness of me, and He tells them where. Now according to the end of Luke, he makes an indication that Jesus is ascending when Jesus says this, and according to verses 9-11 in Acts 1, and He does ascend.
 - o Now I don't know what you see, but this is what I see, I see Jesus standing there and His disciples don't know what's about to take place, and He says you're going to be a witness of me to Jerusalem and Jesus is pointing His hands out and says, "it's literally right there!" Then He says, "then to Judea," and as He says that he

ascends 5,10,15 more feet in the air then points out to all of Judea! Judea is like the county of Jerusalem.

- Then He gets a little higher, 20-30 feet and then points out to Samaria! Now Samaria is in the hill countries to the north, Jesus is breaking cultural boundaries because He tells them you won't just preach the Gospel to the Jews but you'll go into Samaria, to the people you despise and testify of Me.
- Then He probably goes 40 feet higher, almost out of their sight, the disciples are squinting with their hands covering their eyes because the sun is too bright, and as He says his final words Jesus goes, "and to the ends of the earth --- earth, earth (echos)" and SHAZAM He's gone. He disappears out of their sight.
 - It says in verses 9 through 11 that the disciples were literally gazing into heaven. Like come on, they are gazing into heaven that an angel had to come and be like, "yo what's up my dudes, what are you doing? The same Jesus that went up like that He's going to come back in a like manner and before He returns there's something you need to be doing. So get busy, get going!

They're stunned. Shocked at what they just saw. Like look at how silent you guys are, that's how they looked but with their jaws dropping like "did that just happen?"

- I don't know about you but there is something powerful, something that just sticks in our minds when we think of characters in movies who say their final words.
- In Spider-Man, Uncle Ben as he gets shot and is lying on the sidewalk tells Peter, "With Great power comes (have the crowd say it out loud) great responsibility." Peter Parker carries this phrase with him **HIS ENTIRE LIFE.**
 - Real quick I'm super curious, my 2 year old son is just absolutely obsessed with spiderman. Are all little boys just in love with Spider-man? Raise your hand if your little boy that was his favorite superhero? Ok glad I'm not the only one.
- In the Lion King, before Mufasa dies, he tells his son Simba, "Simba, Remember who you are." These words guide Simba's destiny when he is wayward, runs away, but finally comes back to the Pride Lands.
- In the first Iron Man and in the last Avenger's movie, Tony Stark says, "and I ---- I'm Iron Man." BOOM HE SNAPS HIS FINGER and wins the end game and Thanos and the evil aliens turns into dust.

Guys, for many of us, these final words WE KNOW THEM and REMEMBER THEM. They stick to OUR HEADS and make an impact in our hearts...

- So what about Jesus' final words? But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
 - o Does Jesus' final words carry the same significance in our hearts and minds that force us to take His commandment seriously? When we want to quit, when we want to take the easy way out and not fulfill our calling, we need to remember Jesus' final words realizing there's something we need to be doing before Jesus returns. When Jesus says go to the ends of the earth, preach the gospel, define the gospel, make disciples, reveal the heart of the Father, be witnesses, and live out the Gospel to all nations, to the ends of the earth then we need to know our role in doing exactly that.

Main Ideas:

So I ask you one more time, what passion grips you the most and is this passion strong enough for you to live and die for?

I'm going to give you two passions that you should live and die for.

1) A passion to glorify God.

When everything you do is for the sole aim of wanting to please your Heavenly Father and see him glorified, see him praised, see him worshipped alone, see him reign over the lives of people, then you can walk confidently knowing God will reveal His perfect will to you to play your part in the Great Commission.

I believe the glory of God is also the expression of God's holiness and His divine, perfect will and appointments seen clearly in real time. It is the display of God's power on full blast to His people.

- Your passion and goal in your life should be **to see that glory in you!** It screams to the world this is God's holiness in my life.

Illustration: I think of Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai the second time. The first time Moses comes down from the mountain and sees the Israelites worshipping a golden calf so he breaks it in half because he was so furious. The second time, the Bible says Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets in his hand and Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. The Bible says then that Aaron and the people of Israel were afraid to come near him.

- We can clearly see in this story that God's holiness was expressed through the face of Moses and they were scared to talk to Moses because they would be confronted with how unholy they were to approach him.
- When you approach God, like Moses, having a passion to see God's glory and to see Him glorified, God asks something from us: He asks us to pursue a life of holiness.
 - 1 Peter 1:15-16, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - For us to have a passion to see God glorified is for us to have a passion to desire God's holy sanctification in your own life.

2) A passion to see the lost (sinners) saved.

If you want to make God's name famous, you MUST have a passion to see sinners saved.

To reel us back into our passage, let me reread these verses again in Romans 9. Paul makes a radical claim here and he says if I could, I wish that I myself would be accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers. These people who do not know God, though they should, if I could I would be condemned for their sake so they could intimately know Christ.

- The word "cut off" in Greek is *apokoptō* (*ah-puh-kohp-to*), meaning damned to hell. Paul goes so far to say that I have such a love, such a burden for the lost that I wish I would be accursed and damned to hell, separated from my one true Love Jesus for the sake to see sinners saved.
 - Like just think about that for a second. Who in the right mind can say confidently and boldly say that? (loud) I have a deep burden for the lost too but is it that easy for me to separate myself from my King, my Savior, my Lord, the one who forgave me of my trespasses, the one who gave me a new life, who blessed me with a beautiful wife and two beautiful boys, who gave me a new heart, who gave me everything I could ever want, the person I chase after on a daily basis, the person who is at the center of my mind and my heart, the person that I am madly in love with, the person who I would be crucified for and say, "hey I'll be damned to hell -- cut off from your presence FOREVER -- if you save, 100, 1000, 10,000 people in my place." I don't know if I could do that!
 - Paul says, "I am speaking the truth in Christ – I am not lying and my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit," that this is what I would do for sinners to be saved.
 - Listen, here's the good news: we won't ever have to be put in a place where we have to choose to sacrifice our love of God for people to be saved because that's not possible. It is not possible for me to save others

by sacrificing myself. It is not possible for me to go to hell for others to go to heaven. My faith cannot save you, your parent's faith cannot save you, your family's faith cannot save, nothing will be able to save you other than faith in Jesus because Jesus is the only who can save you.

This is a passion that will drive you forever, not out of motivation coming from your own motive, but out of deep conviction, brokenness and inspiration, coming from the Spirit.

A passion like this will radically transform the way you serve people in your community. A passion like this is exactly why we as a church engage in global missions. Why the leadership at Awaken received a vision from the Lord to pioneer the Awaken Church Communities where churches and pastors from ALL OVER THE WORLD stand firm believing we are stronger and better together than alone and isolated.

A passion like this will radically transform and renew your mind in how you fulfill your role in the Great Commission. This passion didn't come from Paul's giftings or talents, but his love for people that drove Paul to do exactly what he did.

- This passion for desiring to see sinners saved comes from the realization that Christ paid the highest price, went the farthest lengths, and took the punishment that was due by going to the cross.

Illustration:

- You may have heard this story before but there was a turning point in my faith that crushed my soul. That broke my heart like I have never experienced before.
- Story in Japan of meeting somebody who had never met a Christian before in their life.
 - o Explain the story and how I felt afterwards (being saturated in stickers on cars talking about Jesus, churches on nearly every block, Christians all around me, etc)
 - o Why did I get to grow up in a Christian nation but they didn't? Why did I have all the resources around me to make the right decision, but they don't? Why am I saved, and they are not?
 - God's grace, and I just remember Genesis 12, "I will bless you so that you will be a blessing."

So if you were wondering, why are you going to plant a church in Japan? Well because God broke me. God crushed me. God shared with me a piece of His heart of how He views and feels about 99% of the Japanese population who have not been forgiven of their sin and do not know Jesus whatsoever, and He asked me, "what are you going to do about it?" I said Lord, "Here am I, send me."

- Now we're in the process of still raising monthly financial support where we have a little over 50% of our monthly funds raised, all given through the church Japan budget account, but until we see the Lord continue to provide, we're going to be faithful and finish this season strong.

Closing/Recap:

When I learned to let these two passions start to grip me, a passion to glorify God and a passion to see sinners saved, I learned my role in obeying Jesus' command of fulfilling the Great Commission.

- For me, it is to plant a church in Japan where I am willing to stay there my entire life if that's His will.
- My encouragement to you is not everyone has to plant a church or be a part of a church planting team to fulfill their role in this mission.
 - o You can be a sender through praying and you can be a sender through giving financially. You can be a sender through raising up disciples and by mobilizing more people to go into all of the nations, to the ends of the earth. You can be a sender by being faithful in your local church and joining the mission and vision of your home church.
 - o You can also be a go-er. Go on a short term mission trip. Go on a long term mission trip. Go be a missionary. If you want to join my Japan church planting team, come talk to me after the service, haha just kidding but if you're serious let's actually pray through it.
 - o But you will not confidently know your role if these two passions are not what your own personal, deep convictions: a passion to glorify God, and a passion to see sinners saved.

Story Closing:

As you know, I try to always close my sermons with a story.

Do you guys know that one song, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.”

Well, I don't know if you know the context in which this song was written, but in the mid 1800s, a missionary traveled to a remote village in Assam, India, where the gospel had never been heard. Through this missionary preaching and sharing the gospel, a man in the tribe, his wife, and their two children came to faith in Christ. Their faith was contagious and many other villagers began to accept Christianity.

The village chief was furious so he called all of the villagers in their tribe for a community meeting and he called the man before the community and demanded that he renounce his faith or face public execution.

The man moved by the Holy Spirit replied: **“I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back.”**

Enraged, the chief ordered his archers to kill the man's two children right before his eyes. Again the chief demanded, “renounce your faith right now!!!”

The man goes: **“Though none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back.”**

The chief then had his wife killed. Finally, as the arrows pointed toward him, the chief gives him one last chance, “I will give you one more opportunity to deny your faith and live.”

The man declared: **“The cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back.”**

He was killed on the spot, shot dead with the rest of his family.

But with their deaths, a miracle happened. The chief who ordered the killings was moved by the faith of the man and said: *“I too want a taste of that faith. And in a spontaneous confession the chief said, “I belong to Jesus Christ.”* Soon after, many in that village came to faith.

Final Thoughts:

We are in this series for a reason, God of Miracles. Well, we will see God do miracle after miracle when you too declare with your mouth and with your life, “I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back.” Commit yourself to the final words of Jesus of playing your part in fulfilling the Great Commission and start by letting these two passions grip you: a passion to glorify God and see that glory in you, and a passion of seeing sinners saved.