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Great Commission

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It is the love of Christ which constrains us and moves our hearts to those people in need of the gospel. As a young man at the age of twenty the Lord called me to preach. He called me to a full-time service. This was 1977 and I had my own plans about my future career.

When Jesus saw that the entire world was in darkness and confused, He spoke to his disciples: “And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).²¹¹ Other versions say, “He was moved with compassion”, meaning that Jesus was greatly touched.

Jesus, as an example of the greatest leader, delegated the responsibility to His disciples. “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 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

In order for the gospel to reach every human being the church (followers of Christ) must “go”. Before the end comes, Jesus said, “...this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come” (Matthew 24:14).

Now, the Great Commission comes into place and it is about sending out disciples into the whole world. When Jesus first sent His disciples, He sent them exclusively to the house of Jacob or the nation of Israel.

“These twelve disciples, Jesus sent them out after instructing them saying, ‘Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans, but rather go to the lost sheep of Israel’” (Matthew 10:5-6).

The Great Commission is therefore different from the previous

²¹¹ All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible

commission. It is a commission of an overwhelming magnitude. Now listen to Jesus as He pronounces it with a resounding majesty: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18b-20). The magnitude of this commission is that the nations of the whole world must be reached with the gospel, **THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST**.

The church, or the people who are called by his name (and God Himself is not ashamed to be called their God), must realize that in order for the nations of the world to be converted into Christianity, it must go to them.

The scripture says: “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDING OF GOOD THINGS’” (Romans 10:14-15).

As Jesus was sent by God, He also sent His disciples. So our denomination, the Church of the Nazarene, is a people sent by God and must continue to be a sending people since this is an on-going task. “As thou didst send me into the world I also have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). The Church of the Nazarene as a sending people continues the work of Christ.

To be a sending people is to be a people with the vision of Christ. This is to say the Church of the Nazarene is a Christ-centred church. A sending people are a praying people, a giving people, and a caring people.

Since we do not want to lose sight of the needs of the people, the World Mission Division has a department of **COMPASSIONATE MINISTRIES** which reaches out to the needs of the people. To countries and regions where disaster has hit hard, where floods and drought leave the people in great need, the Church of the Nazarene comes with aid such as food and clothing through the Compassionate Ministries Department. This is how the church ministers to the various needs of the people.

Jesus ministered to all people meeting their needs. That is to say Jesus

ministered to the total person or the whole person. “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (Matthew 9:35).

Jesus preached, taught, and healed the sick. The Church of the Nazarene established churches, schools, and clinics in order to meet the needs of the total man. The Compassionate Ministries division caters for the physical needs of people.

The Bible says that as Jesus saw the multitudes, “they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). The New International Version says, “they were harassed.” The reason for the existence of the Church of the Nazarene is that we must, as a church, present Christ in our communities and make a difference. People must know and see that we are “... servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

The church must evangelize through both mass and personal evangelism. We must teach the new convert and make disciples who will also evangelize and win souls. One of the effective tools we have for evangelism is the JESUS FILM. The local church revivals, Bible-study and prayer cells are still essential for evangelism in our world.

Our response to the Great Commission must be, “YES LORD, send me”. We must respond to God’s call positively more than ever before. The Bible Colleges and Theological Universities of the Church of the Nazarene must be filled with men and women who are prepared to take the gospel to the whole world.

When God called Isaiah the prophet, it was clear that the work was enormous. Listen to Isaiah as he asked the Lord: “Then Isaiah said, ‘Lord how long’? And He answered, ‘UNTIL CITIES ARE DEVASTATED AND INHABITED HOUSES ARE WITHOUT PEOPLE AND THE LAND IS UTTERLY DESOLATE’” (Isaiah 6:11).

There are disturbing trends like wars, hunger, politics and AIDS (the dreaded disease). The church can use some of these trends as an opportunity to spread the Gospel to those who are bed-ridden because of AIDS; the church must be available to offer hope. There is hope of salvation and eternity with God in spite of the killer disease. The one who

has called us (the church) is faithful and will do it. The promises of God are ALL YES. “He who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one will open, says this, ‘BEHOLD I HAVE PUT BEFORE YOU AN OPEN DOOR WHICH NO ONE SHALL SHUT’” (Revelation 3:7b-8).

The challenges we face now are becoming more complicated than before. Some countries because of political changes are rejecting the Bible. To teach the Bible or teach the Lord’s Prayer in public schools would be a crime in some countries. Other countries have legalized prostitution and homosexuality arguing that it is a human-right according to their constitution. But our God has promised us that even the gates of hell will not prevail against His church.