Living in Christian Community

Matt 28:18-20; Heb 10:22-25
SS Lesson for 05/31/2026

Devotional Scriptures: 1 Cor 9:19-26

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Heb 10:23

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

LIVING IN RESPONSE TO THE GREAT COMMISSION (MATT 28:18-20)
- *A Commission from and with authority (18)*
  - Authority to disciple others (Matt 4:19)
  - Authority with power over demons and diseases (Luke 9:1)
  - Authority and stewardship of God's Word (Col 1:25)
  - Authority that is commissioned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-4)
- *A Commission that involves baptism (19)*
  - A baptism that signified repentance (Acts 19:1-7)
  - A baptism that symbolized being buried with Jesus (Col 2:11-12)
  - A baptism that symbolized a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:18-22)
  - A baptism with water (Acts 1:5)
- *A Commission that involves teaching (20)*
  - Teaching with wisdom (Col 3:16)
  - Teaching with ability from God (1 Tim 3:2)
  - Teaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)
  - Teaching that is anointed (1 John 2:27)

LIVING WITH FAITH THAT IS UNWAVERING (HEB 10:23-25)
- *Unwavering because of being near to God (22)*
  - Near God through the blood of Jesus (Eph 2:13-14)
  - Near God though His works (Ps 64:9)
  - Near God through the fear of God (Rev 15:4)
  - Near God though the creation (Acts 17:26-27)
  - Near God though restoration (Acts 15:14-17)
- *Unwavering because God keeps His promises (23)*
  - Promises that are always "YES" in Jesus (2 Cor 1:20)
  - Promises made with the Divine power (2 Peter 1:3-4)
  - Promises that are only being completely satisfied in the present age (Heb 11:13-16)
  - Promises of an eternal life (1 John 2:24-25)
- *Unwavering because God loves us (24)*
  - God loves us because He is love (1 John 4:8)
  - God loves us because He is rich in it (Eph 2:4)
  - God loves us because nothing can separate us from His love (Rom 8:39)
  - God loves us because He sacrificed His Son (John 3:16)
  - God loves us because of His grace (2 Thess 2:16)
- *Unwavering in our assembling (25)*
  - Assembling to learn about the Scriptures (Acts 17:1-4)
  - Assembling in the presence of God (Matt 18:20)
  - Assembling for fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)
  - Assembling for prayer (Acts 1:14)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH
- *Conclusion*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Today's lesson comes from two New Testament texts. The first is Matthew 28, which describes events following Jesus' resurrection. Mary discovers the empty tomb, brings the news to the disciples, and Jesus appears to them (Matthew 28:1-10). Religious officials pay off Roman soldiers to tell a different story (28:11-15). These events take place in and around Jerusalem. When we pick up with our text, however, the disciples are on a mountaintop in Galilee (28:16). Jesus gives them instructions for continuing ministry (28:18-20). The second text comes from the book of Hebrews. Its unnamed author draws significantly from the Old Testament, quoting or referencing it nearly 30 times. The book's use of Old Testament passages strengthens its claims regarding Jesus and the new covenant. In particular, the author emphasizes Jesus' superiority (Hebrews 1:5-2:18), priestly status (4:14-5:10), and eternal sacrifice (9:1-10:18). The verses just prior to today's lesson establish that believers have access to the presence of God because of the work of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20). Jesus serves as the "great priest over the house of God" (10:21). Through Jesus, believers may approach the very throne of God (see 4:16). Hebrews describes God's house in new, spiritual terms (3:6). Jesus is not the priest of a physical building, such as the temple in Jerusalem. Instead, he is the priest over the very people of God (Ephesians 2:21-22). As members of God's family, "living stones" that make up his house (1 Peter 2:5), we host God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). God calls believers to live faithfully in community, to respond to him, and to serve each other.

Key Verse: Heb 10:23

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Living in Response to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20)

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

A Commission from and with authority (18)

Authority to disciple others (Matt 4:19)

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Authority with power over demons and diseases (Luke 9:1)

9 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,

Authority and stewardship of God's Word (Col 1:25)

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

Authority that is commissioned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-4)

2 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. 4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

A Commission that involves baptism (19)

A baptism that signified repentance (Acts 19:1-7)

> 1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he
> found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They
> answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism
> did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. 4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.
> He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were
> baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on
> them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

A baptism that symbolized being buried with Jesus (Col 2:11-12)

> 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done
> by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism
> and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

A baptism that symbolized a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:18-22)

> 18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put
> to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits
> in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was
> being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes
> baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good
> conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and
> is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

A baptism with water (Acts 1:5)

> 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

A Commission that involves teaching (20)

Teaching with wisdom (Col 3:16)

> 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and
> as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Teaching with ability from God (1 Tim 3:2)

> 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled,
> respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Teaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)

> 2 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

Teaching that is anointed (1 John 2:27)

> 27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach
> you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as
> it has taught you, remain in him.

Living with Faith that is Unwavering (Heb 10:23-25)

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.
24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,
25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Unwavering because of being near to God (22)

Near God through the blood of Jesus (Eph 2:13-14)

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

Near God though His works (Ps 64:9)

9 All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.

Near God through the fear of God (Rev 15:4)

4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Near God though the creation (Acts 17:26-27)

26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Near God though restoration (Acts 15:14-17)

14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: 16 "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things'

Unwavering because God keeps His promises (23)

Promises that are always "YES" in Jesus (2 Cor 1:20)

20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Promises made with the Divine power (2 Peter 1:3-4)

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Promises that are only being completely satisfied in the present age (Heb 11:13-16)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Promises of an eternal life (1 John 2:24-25)

24 See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he promised us — even eternal life.

Unwavering because God loves us (24)

God loves us because He is love (1 John 4:8)

8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

God loves us because He is rich in it (Eph 2:4)

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

God loves us because nothing can separate us from His love (Rom 8:39)

39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God loves us because He sacrificed His Son (John 3:16)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God loves us because of His grace (2 Thess 2:16)

16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope,

Unwavering in our assembling (25)

Assembling to learn about the Scriptures (Acts 17:1-4)

1 When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

Assembling in the presence of God (Matt 18:20)

20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Assembling for fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Assembling for prayer (Acts 1:14)

14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Conclusion

The absolute authority of our Lord Jesus Christ should come as no surprise. By the way, absolute authority has a name: sovereignty. Our Lord claims sovereignty. His sovereignty vastly overshadows the authority of mere men, even great kings. This is something that King Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way:

34 But at the end of the appointed time I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up toward heaven, and my sanity returned to me. I extolled the Most High, and I praised and glorified the one who lives forever. For his authority is an everlasting authority, and his kingdom extends from one generation to the next. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he wishes with the army of heaven and with those who inhabit the earth. No one slaps his hand and says to him, ‘What have you done?’ 36 At that time my sanity returned to me. I was restored to the honor of my kingdom, and my splendor returned to me. My ministers and my nobles were seeking me out, and I was reinstated over my kingdom. I became even greater than before. 37 Now I,

Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all his deeds are right and his ways are just. He is able to bring down those who live in pride (Daniel 4:34-37).

In our text, Matthew chooses to end his Gospel with Christ's claim to absolute authority, as the basis of the Great Commission. We must now seek to explore how the sovereignty of our Savior is the basis for the Great Commission. How does the authority of our Lord impact His command to make disciples of all nations? This is a particularly important question because there are those who would assert that the sovereignty of God is contrary to man's responsibility to make disciples. Let us therefore conclude this lesson by exploring some of the implications of the sovereignty of our Savior for missions and evangelism.

Let us begin by considering the implications of our Lord's authority in light of the comments of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-13:

5 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him asking for help: 6 "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible anguish." 7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Instead, just say the word and my servant will be healed. 9 For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go' and he goes, and to another 'Come' and he comes, and to my slave 'Do this' and he does it." 10 When Jesus heard this he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found such faith in anyone in Israel! 11 I tell you, many will come from the east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; just as you believed, it will be done for you." And the servant was healed at that hour (Matthew 8:5-13).

From the centurion's faith-based statement, we can see that our Lord's sovereignty empowers Him to give commands, with the assumption that those under His authority should promptly obey. He merely needs to speak the word (as He does in the Great Commission), and those under His authority should do as He has commanded. The Great Commission is a command, a command issued by the One who has all authority.

Secondly, when your authority is great, distance is not an issue. The centurion knew that Jesus had great authority, and thus He merely needed to speak the word that the servant be healed, and it would be done. Jesus may command His disciples to go to the most remote part of the world (Acts 1:8), and we should go. We should go knowing that His authority is as great there as it is anywhere.

In his early life, Abram had trouble grasping this truth (that God's authority and control is over every part of the earth). When a famine came to the land of Canaan, Abram fled to Egypt. There he passed off his wife, Sarai, as his sister (Genesis 12:10-20). Later, Abraham (no longer called Abram) repeated the sin of passing off Sarah as his sister, this time to Abimelech (Genesis 20). When the Abimelech rebuked Abraham for his deceit, Abraham responded with this weak excuse:

10 Then Abimelech asked Abraham, "What prompted you to do this thing?" 11 Abraham replied, "Because I thought, 'Surely no one fears God in this place. They will kill me because of my wife'" (Genesis 20:10-11).

Abraham's God was "**too small**" (to borrow the expression from J. B. Phillips). Abraham thought that since he was far from home, God was no longer in control, and thus his need for deceit. God's control is absolute, and thus there is nowhere we can go that He will not be sovereignly in control.

Thirdly, let us learn from the story of the centurion that believing in God's absolute control and authority is a matter of faith. You and I know that is true. When we are afraid, it is a failure of faith, a failure to trust that God is in complete control of the events of our lives.

Now, let us consider the implications of our Lord's sovereignty in relation to our ability to carry out the Great Commission. Having authority means having the power to carry out what we purpose to do. When Jesus claimed all authority, He was implying what He states clearly elsewhere – that He will give His disciples the power to carry out the Great Commission:

After Jesus called the twelve together, He gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (Luke 9:1).

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it stands written that the Messiah would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 **And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high**" (Luke 24:45-49, emphasis mine).

4 While he was with them, he declared, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait there for what my Father promised, which you heard about from me” (Acts 1:4).

8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned (John 16:8-11).

Without the power of the Holy Spirit, our efforts are useless:

They will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power. So avoid people like these (2 Timothy 3:5).

Consider the implications of the sovereignty of our Lord as it relates to our motivation to carry out the Great Commission. Knowing that the One who commanded us to go and make disciples of every nation is in absolute control, we have great confidence and boldness, even when we meet opposition. Note the boldness of the apostles in proclaiming Christ:

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, replied, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today for a good deed done to a sick man—by what means this man was healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man stands before you healthy. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, that has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved.” 13 When **they saw the boldness of Peter and John**, and discovered that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:8-13, emphasis mine).

23 When they were released, Peter and John went to their fellow believers and reported everything the high priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices to God with one mind and said, “Master of all, you who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them, 25 who said by the Holy Spirit through your servant David our forefather, ‘Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot foolish things? 26 The kings of the earth stood together, and the rulers assembled together, against the Lord and against his Christ.’ 27 “For indeed both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, 28 to do as much as your power and your plan had decided beforehand would happen. 29 And now, Lord, pay attention to their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your message with great courage, 30 while you extend your hand to heal, and to bring about miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God courageously (Acts 4:23-31).

10 For indeed, what had been glorious now has no glory because of the tremendously greater glory of what replaced it. 11 For if what was made ineffective came with glory, how much more has what remains come in glory! 12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, **we behave with great boldness**, 13 and not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at the result of the glory that was made ineffective (2 Corinthians 3:10-13, emphasis mine).

The sovereignty of God has great implications for the message we preach. If Christ is sovereign over all – has full authority, in heaven and on earth – then to whom would we point men, other than to Him? Our message should be Christ, crucified, buried, raised, and elevated to a position of unchallenged, unlimited power and authority.

But we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23).

22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man clearly attested to you by God with powerful deeds, wonders, and miraculous signs that God performed among you through him, just as you yourselves know— 23 this man, who was handed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing him to a cross at the hands of Gentiles. 24 But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. 25 For David says about him, ‘I saw the Lord always in front of me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken. 2:26 Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; my body also will live in hope, 2:27 because you will not leave my soul in Hades, nor permit your Holy One to experience decay. 2:28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of joy with your presence.’ 29 “Brothers, I can speak confidently to you about our forefather David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 So then, because he was a

prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31 David by foreseeing this spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his body experience decay. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out what you both see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand 2:35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."' 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:22-36).

27 For the people who live in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize him, and they fulfilled the sayings of the prophets that are read every Sabbath by condemning him. 28 Though they found no basis for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had accomplished everything that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we proclaim to you the good news about the promise to our ancestors, 33 that this promise God has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have fathered you.' 34 But regarding the fact that he has raised Jesus from the dead, never again to be in a state of decay, God has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and trustworthy promises made to David.' 35 Therefore he also says in another psalm, 'You will not permit your Holy One to experience decay.' 36 For David, after he had served God's purpose in his own generation, died, was buried with his ancestors, and experienced decay, 37 but the one whom God raised up did not experience decay. 38 Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through this one forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by this one everyone who believes is justified from everything from which the law of Moses could not justify you. 40 Watch out, then, that what is spoken about by the prophets does not happen to you: 41 'Look, you scoffers; be amazed and perish! For I am doing a work in your days, a work you would never believe, even if someone tells you'" (Acts 13:27-41).

The sovereignty of our Savior prohibits "Pollyanna preaching." We dare not preach only the "happy texts" of the Bible. We must preach the whole gospel. And the whole gospel is that because Jesus Christ has all authority, in heaven and on earth, when He returns to the earth He will both deliver His saints into His kingdom, and He will doom His enemies to an eternity in hell. We dare not leave out the warning to condemned sinners that Jesus is coming again to judge His enemies. The warning of judgment is found throughout the Old Testament and the New. In the New, John the Baptist warned men that Christ's coming would not be "good news" for many (see Matthew 3:1-12). Peter and Paul preached the same kind of gospel (see Acts 2 and 13 above). The absolute authority of Christ is a comfort to believers, and a terrifying reality to the lost:

5 This is evidence of God's righteous judgment, to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which in fact you are suffering. 6 For it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to you who are being afflicted to give rest together with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. 8 With flaming fire he will mete out punishment on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will undergo the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, 10 when he comes to be glorified among his saints and admired on that day among all who have believed—and you did in fact believe our testimony (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).

If the Lord who sent us to proclaim the gospel has absolute authority, then surely the message we preach should be an authoritative message. The gospel message is, then, a command that men are to obey. I am not denying the element of appeal, but our appeal should never conceal the authority of the One for whom and of whom we are speaking. Paul speaks of us as ambassadors, and that we are:

Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!" (2 Corinthians 5:20)

We have no need of watering down the gospel or of adding to it. We need to be very careful about "marketing" the gospel in a way that diminishes it, and the glory of the One of whom and for whom we are speaking.

And who is adequate for these things? 17 For we are not like so many others, hucksters who peddle the word of God for profit, but we are speaking in Christ before God as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God (2 Corinthians 2:16b-17).

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged. 2 But we have rejected shameful hidden deeds, not behaving with deceptiveness or distorting the word of God, but by open proclamation of the truth we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience before God (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

The sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ means He is both our salvation and our security. Those whom He saves, He sanctifies. Those whom He saves are secure, in Him.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you" (John 15:16).

For I am sure of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

31 What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:31-39).

Praise God that the One who chose us to follow Him, and who commanded us to make disciples of all nations, is Sovereign. The sovereignty of God is the basis for the Great Commission.

(*Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/35-great-commission-part-ii-sovereignty-god-and-great-commission-matthew-2816-20)*

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Life in God's kingdom is not a solo journey but a family endeavor. We fill various roles throughout our lives, as learners, proclaimers, mentors, guides, encouragers, worshipers, and those who serve. We participate in various activities to enhance and develop our faith. Matthew's Gospel urges disciples to participate in kingdom building by proclaiming the gospel, baptizing new disciples, and teaching the way of King Jesus. It is a call for ongoing obedience to him, commitment to one another, and care for humanity. The facets of worship presented in Jesus' Great Commission point believers toward preaching and teaching, sacraments, public declarations of faith, and personal relationships with other believers through apprenticeship or mentoring. The book of Hebrews provides clear instructions on how believers are to behave within a Christian community. Unity in this community is anchored in the hope we have through faith in Christ (Hebrews 6:19). Worship elements highlighted throughout today's passage include drawing near to God in confident faith, remembering our cleansing through Jesus' blood, holding onto hope with steadfastness, encouraging one another in good works of service, and regularly meeting for worship and fellowship. Although today's texts don't use the word worship, a holistic life of worship is outlined within them. They pave the way for a comprehensive life as a disciple of Christ. Worship naturally occurs when God's people gather and faithfully uphold his commands. Together, we remember Jesus' sacrifice and person, celebrate his resurrection, and band together to make new disciples. We faithfully teach what Jesus taught, support one another, and urge each other toward actionable love. The people of God need one another as we follow King Jesus, the one who will one day return to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1). Is there a facet of worship outlined in these texts that is missing from your personal practice? Have you taken an active role in both faithful discipleship and disciple-making?