Hello. Let’s start our course in our first lecture dealing with the biblical mandate for evangelism. If you don’t already have your notes open to the notes for this lecture, please stop the tape and do so now.

First, let me ask you a question. You’ve been around evangelical churches and evangelical ministries for some time, perhaps much or even all of your life. You’ve heard many people try to motivate you and your friends to be involved in evangelism. What are some of the common motivations that you’ve heard evangelicals use? Many times we hear motivation such as need or compassion. The world is lost and going to hell, don’t you care? Do you want to stand before your neighbor on judgment day and have them say to you, “Why? Why didn’t you tell me?” And their strong pleadings made to our emotions to deal with the compassion for the lost. Often those are tied into a guilt motivation that if you don’t go, who will go? And, if you don’t go and no one goes, then they go to hell. And so, we respond with guilt. Occasionally, gratitude is used as a motivation. Look at all that God has done for you, what can you do for Him? For some, glory. Getting rewards in heaven. And, of course, if you’re Baptist, what does a good Baptist preacher do at 11:55AM Sunday morning? Tradition. Sometimes our motivation for evangelism is simply this is what we do.

Now all of those motivations are in fact good at a point. For it is true that people are lost and going to hell. But when it becomes manipulative, it’s not a good motivation. It is true that what I do here on earth counts for heaven, and therefore, I should be motivated to use my life here on earth from an eternal perspective. And some traditions are good traditions. Some traditions are traditions worth preserving, but all of these, also, can become manipulations instead of motivations.

What we want to recognize at the beginning is that the only primary motivation for evangelism is obedience; or, said in a
different way, the love of Christ constrains me. I usually say obedience first because, at least in North America, when people hear the love of Christ, they think of a feeling. They think of an ooey-gooey; someone who gets this very, very pietistic look on their face, stares toward heaven. That’s not what the love of Christ means. It means my obedience to Him, my love for Him, my commitment to Him, my loyalty to Him.

We do evangelism because God has told us to do evangelism. We may or may not feel like doing it. We may or may not want to do it, but God has told us to do it. What do we mean when we say evangelism?

The second major point in your notes. John Knox, the famous Scotsman, said, “Give me Scotland or I die.” That’s a good working definition of evangelism. George Whitfield who, thirteen times, crossed the Atlantic in small sailing boats, so small most of us would never get on them for a small lake, much less the Atlantic Ocean. That’s a man who’s understood evangelism. Henry Martyn, when he landed on the shores of India crying out, “Here let me burn out for God.” Or perhaps the most beautiful working definition of evangelism — a man, Andrew, who upon discovering Jesus, went to his brother and said, “We have found the Messiah,” and then brought his brother to Jesus.

In terms of a formal definition of evangelism, perhaps the Lausanne Covenant in article four is most helpful. Evangelicals have very few places and times where we get together and agree upon things, and the Lausanne Conferences have been one of those major events for the whole twentieth century. Let’s read in your notes the Lausanne Covenant article four, The Nature of Evangelism.

“To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that, as reigning Lord, He now offers forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to Him personally and so be reconciled to God.”
That sentence is worth highlighting. Let me say it again. “Evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as savior and Lord.” It’s not just living the life, it’s saying words. And those words are said with a view to persuading people to come to Him and so be reconciled to God. The Lausanne Covenant continues.

“In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who will follow him deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with this new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into the church, responsible service to the world.”

But Lausanne sees these as results of evangelism, not evangelism.

The Greek term, *euangelizo*, simply means to bring or to announce good news. It’s the term from which we get evangelism. Evangelism is the bringing of good news. And as evangelicals, we mean, specifically, the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now some cautions. Evangelism must never be defined in terms of results, and yet, it often is. Often evangelicals look at evangelism and define it in terms of results. The Big Three Cs—number of contacts, number of converts, and number of church members. But there may be many contacts or few, many converts or few, many who eventually join the church or few, or even none. An evangelism can still be done because evangelism is the proclamation of the message; it is not the response to the message. So be careful not to define evangelism in terms of results. Results are a valid question to ask if we ask them as a question of stewardship, of wise allocation of resource, of identifying if we’re meeting the needs of the community God has called us to meet. But those are not the basis for defining evangelism.

Second, evangelism must never be defined in terms of methods. I remember, as a young believer, being trained in how to share my faith using a little booklet. For probably a year or two of my Christian life, in my mind, evangelism hadn’t occurred unless we read through the little booklet with someone. Now the
booklet was good. Sharing it with others was wonderful. But it’s not evangelism as a method; it is evangelism as a proclamation that we’re concerned about.

Third, evangelism may, indeed must, be defined only in terms of the message. Always and only in terms of the message. The message is key. That’s why, two lectures from now, we’ll be spending some time looking at what the gospel message is.

How about the biblical mandate for evangelism? In your notes, you have a chart showing the four gospel writer’s record of the authorizing command of Jesus to evangelize. Turn to that chart, please. What’s interesting to observe in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, and John is that they follow a fairly standard pattern. Each one gives some statement of the authority and power given to the disciples to do this task. Matthew, for example, says, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth,” or, “Low, I am with you always, even to the end of age.” Those statements by Jesus, as recorded by Matthew, make it very clear that we have the authority and the power to go.

If I may make a few comments here, we often hear the idea that we have to earn the right to be heard. I don’t see that in scripture. Scripture says we are given the right to proclaim. We do not earn the right to be heard, we are given the right to proclaim. God has all authority. He’s told us to go. In fact, we’re referred to elsewhere in the New Testament as ambassadors for Jesus Christ. An ambassador does not have to earn their credentials. An ambassador goes on the basis of the authority and the power of the ruler they represent, and so it is for us.

Mark talks about authority through confirming signs and the Lord’s work through them. Luke talks about the authority and power by referring to the promise of my father upon you, called the power from on high, which of course, in Acts 1:8, is the power of the Holy Spirit. John refers to the Holy Spirit who is the source of empowerment for all of the Christian life as well as ministry. Each one describes a task, although somewhat differently. Matthew, as you are going, make disciples, baptize and teach. Mark says, go preach the gospel. Luke talks about some of the content of the message, proclaiming repentance for forgiveness of sins, being my witness. John says that we are to deal with the issue of sin as we bear witness for Christ.

The extent is always the same. All the nations in Matthew. All
the world in Mark. All the nations: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the remotest part of the earth, in Luke/Acts. And although John doesn’t have it in chapter twenty, his gospel makes it clear, especially in chapter three verse sixteen, that it is to all of the world, to every person. The message, each one refers to it, what Christ has commanded us, the gospel, repentance of forgiveness, belief.

What is most significant, though, are the final two parts of this little chart. Think with me for a moment of what would happen in your church if the next Sunday, the pastor stood up and he said, “No one can come back to church next Sunday who hasn’t shared the gospel with a non-Christian.” That would probably empty out the pews in many of our churches, wouldn’t it? Years ago, when I was doing an evangelistic training program in a church, I made the mistake of saying, “We’re going to take a short break now, and when we come back we’re going to pair up, and then we’re going to share the gospel with people in the neighborhood.” We emptied out about 90% of the people at the training seminar with that one comment.

If you could be honest, and if the people in the church could be honest, I suspect you and they would be displaying some of the attitudes and feelings that the people who were given the great commission had. For example, in Matthew, some worshipped but some were doubtful. In Mark, they were mourning and weeping, and Jesus reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart. Hardness of heart? Yow! Who do you think of in the Bible when you think of hardness of heart? That’s right, Pharaoh! This is not what you would call moving with the movers. This is not what you would call spiritually sensitive people. This is not what you would describe as one zealous for the ways of the Lord. These are people who are terrified. These are people who are finding it extremely hard to believe.

In Luke and Acts, they’re startled and frightened at Jesus’ appearance. They are troubled; they have doubts. Some join marvel. In John, they’re described as afraid. In fact, they’re so afraid that they’re in an upper room and they close the door. Who’s going to see them? Why do they have to close the door when they’re upstairs? They seem to be very terrified of what’s going on. Those were the people who were given the Great Commission.

My point is simply this—a few of you taking this course probably have the gift of evangelism; a few others are, what I call by
personality, a wild-eyed extrovert. That is, you truly enjoy meeting a non-Christian or a total stranger. You like walking up to them; you like talking with them, and they enjoy responding, but most of us, eighty, ninety, ninety-five, ninety-eight percent of many churches, are people who would rather do anything than meet a stranger. They are people who find starting a conversation with a non-Christian to be extremely intimidating, which creates great emotional anguish in us. We have the same attitude as those who were given the Great Commission. My point is simply that. You may not feel like an evangelist. You may not wake up in the middle of the night, praying for the lost. That’s okay. You were given the Great Commission, and those you are ministering to were entrusted with the Great Commission. So be involved in sharing the gospel.

The evangelist is a title (back to the notes, point b, The evangelists in the epistles.) Phillip is listed as one in a list of ministries in Ephesians. Timothy is to do the work of an evangelist. Another interesting insight. Not everyone is given the gift of evangelism, but apparently, even those who are not given the gift of evangelism (like Timothy) are to do the work of an evangelist. Evangelism is a requirement that falls upon all believers, not just those believers so gifted.

Many other biblical injunctions are listed here. Some of these would be very helpful for an evangelistic message. To talk about how people are lost and separated from God; how they are unable to save themselves; about how Christ died for their sins; how God is patient so that people may perish. We think of patience, of course, as procrastination. Patience for us is your parents having you get ready for church, and then when you’re all ready, telling you to sit on the couch and be patient while mom and dad finish getting ready. We think of patience as wanting to strip the gears and charge down the road like crazy and being forced to hold the transmission in neutral. When, for God, patience is not doing nothing. Patience is the withholding of judgment; the withholding of sure and justified judgment so that those who are under that judgment may not perish, but rather repent. Read 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 9.

Other biblical motivations and junctions about people need to be told. Romans 10: that God has given us the responsibility to be an ambassador and that Christ’s love should motivate us to obey. We can look at motivations from evangelism from a theological perspective as well. Theology proper, the doctrine of
God. Evangelism is deeply rooted in the nature of God. How do you understand the Father and not understand His love? How do you understand the Son and not understand His mission? How do you understand the Spirit and not understand His ministry? If you understand the doctrine of the nature of God, you must understand the importance of evangelism.

For a moment, look in your notes at the chart comparing a spirit-filled witness and a carnal witness. I’m not here talking about the nature and the ministries of the Holy Spirit that evangelicals have some discussion and, in fact, some disunity on. I’m here talking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit that all responsible evangelical leaders that I’ve read from every faith tradition agree upon, and that is the ministry of the Spirit in the daily life of the believer.

The spirit-filled witness is a one who is a messenger, an ambassador for Jesus Christ. Contrast that to the promoter, the recruiter for the church. You may have seen that. Someone knocks on your door, and you can tell what they really are is a recruiter. What they’re basically saying to you, especially if you’re a non-Christian is, “Hello. We want you to come to our meeting because that will make us feel good. We want you to get up early on the one day you get to sleep in. We want you to come and wear your most uncomfortable clothes on the day you get to wear your most comfortable clothes. We want you to sing songs you’ve never sung before on the day you get to listen to music you like best. We want you to read a book that you’ve never read before on the day you get to read what you want to read. We want you to be around total strangers on the day that you get to be around your friends.” You know what I mean. The promoter, the recruiter, who sometimes knocks on our door.

In contrast is a spirit-filled witness who’s a messenger and ambassador. You can see it in their attitude. When we’re filled with the spirit and we’re involved in evangelism, compassion fills our hearts. We realize that people have needs and we see them through God’s love. When we go in the power of our flesh and the power of our own will, we become fearful. We realize that people are different and so we see them as adversaries, the opposition, the enemy. Sometimes we even use military language to describe our evangelistic efforts as we race out to seek to save one of those lost souls and then return to the safety of our fortress, the church. The spirit-filled witness will approach the unapproachable. The carnal witness will approach those who offer least resistance.
No, I’m not saying that a spirit-filled witness does not go to all people, even those of lower social economic class and status. I’m simply recognizing that we often do evangelism with people who socially have to talk to us. If you’re well dressed, if your clothes tell me that you’re a professional, upper-middle class, and I’m blue collar and you try to talk to me, socially I’m forced to listen. But if you look like you come from a social economic class level, lower than me, socially I’m quite free to walk away and ignore you. Don’t believe me? Go in any downtown and watch the people sitting on the street corners begging for a handout, for a cup of coffee. They’re easily ignored. But then watch a respectable business man in a suit or a business woman in her sharp, business attire come up to someone and they immediately stop and talk with them. Definitely we must go to all people. Not those just of an equal or higher, but also those of a lower social class, for those are not defining issues for Christ and for God. But when we’re filled with the spirit we can approach the unapproachable, not just those that socially we can get away with talking with.

Finally, a spirit-filled witness is one that goes by faith, trusting in God to work, where the carnal witness all too often goes by feelings. If we’re talking about the biblical mandate for evangelism, not only is it rooted in the nature of God; that is, the theology proper, but it’s rooted in anthropology; that is, the nature of people. Evangelism is deeply rooted in the nature of people. When you look at the biblical analysis as people made by God, and yet under the dominion of flesh, the sin, the law, and death, that should drive us if we have any compassion, to share the gospel with them. When we look at modern culture, art, literature, and music, we see the lost-ness of man.

Think for a moment. I’m not a music major. Perhaps I’m just telling you something that is self-evident to those of you trained in music, but I look at different kinds of music and I hear the composer and the presenters of that music telling me something. When I see a symphony or an orchestra, before it begins it does this tuning up process, which sounds like total, absolute chaos. All these squeaks and squawks and whoops and noises, they don’t fit; they don’t work. It just looks like absolute chaos. And then one person taps his stick, lifts his hands, and out of all that chaos comes order, harmony, beauty.

I don’t think it was an accident that classical music has as its foundations a biblical worldview; that there is a God who created the world with beauty and harmony and desires to see
it restored to that. In contrast stands much contemporary music with its slow, de-evolution and a total chaos. Rock music, a number of years ago, was dominated by the beat. The beat can be very moving, but in the end the beat, to me, sounds very much like a machine. What I hear those musicians saying is, “Life is a giant machine. We’re part of this huge technological machine that we’ve created, and all you are is a rill of eighth notes as the machine grinds on.” Now, much of rock music in the later part of the 1990s has even lost those traits and has become, primarily, distortion. A lot of contemporary music groups have massive amounts of distortion in their music so that any sense of rhythm, much less of beauty and harmony, are destroyed. All that’s left is high levels of volume to create feeling within the audience, but no beauty, no harmony, no unity.

Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost. Paul said, “Woe is to me if I do not preach the gospel.” Origin said, “Do you have sorrow for the lost? Do you care enough to be separated from Christ for them?” There is a theologically correct way of saying ‘give a damn.’ When Paul said in Romans that he would willingly be separated from Christ if that could reach his brothers, the Jews, he was in a theologically correct sense ‘giving a damn.’ He was willing to be damned if it could save the lost. Is there even one lost person for whom you have been so concerned that you have prayed to God, “God if it would be possible, I would even give up my own salvation so that they could be saved.” As Origin said, “Do you care enough to be separated from Christ for them?”

Ecclesiology is another doctrine that cannot be understood apart from the task of evangelism. In fact, the very existence and purpose of the church are intimately entwined with evangelism. Matthew is generally recognized as being the evangelist who spoke primarily to the Jews. He’s also the only one of the four gospel writers who introduces this doctrine of church. In Matthew chapter sixteen and again in chapter eighteen, church comes up. To those who understand literature, this becomes a huge question. Why church? After all, hasn’t the history of the Jewish people been a history of rebellion? Hasn’t the history of God’s relationship to Israel been a history of restoration? Every time Israel rebels, some will be lost, but there’s always a remnant and always a remnant that’s restored. So why church? The tension is quite high. After the section on churches, a long section in Matthew’s gospel, which seems to be affirming God’s intentions for Israel, that He will fulfill the promises to Israel. That, although it may be only to a remnant, Israel has not been completely and
totally rejected by God. That everything God has said, He will do. That just increases the tension in the minds of the reader.

As you’re reading Matthew’s gospel, you get towards the end. Eventually you get to where you can see the end is coming and there has still been no resolution to this question of why the church. Then you get to where there’s only a few lines left, and you reach the conclusion there isn’t enough space to answer the question of why the church. And then, in a brilliant move, Matthew answers the question of why the church. He does so by giving the Great Commission. “All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even until the end of the age.”

Why the church? The Great Commission. If you do not understand the Great Commission, you do not understand the church. If you understand the church, you will understand the Great Commission. Of all the things we do, what cannot be done better in heaven? Evangelism. The book of Acts clearly shows this as it repeatedly, in a detailed way, shows how the early church fulfilled its responsibility in the area of evangelism: to reach out to the lost; to take the gospel to all peoples; to leave nothing undone. The biblical mandate for evangelism is extensive. They’re not just commands for evangelism, but they’re examples. Then, as we think through theology, we begin to discover that evangelism is deeply rooted in every area of theology. Now let’s look at point four in the handouts.

What is the Great Commission? The Great Commission is stated two different ways in Mark and Matthew’s gospel. Mark says, “Go unto all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” That would be one definition of the Great Commission. It’s one that seems to be fairly quantitative: going to all the world; preach the gospel to all creation. Matthew, on the other hand, describes the Great Commission in a more qualitative manner. He quotes Jesus as saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Making disciples, baptizing, teaching, this is much more qualitative.

The answer to the question, what is the Great Commission, is that it’s both quantitative and qualitative. We are not simply to go
around sharing the gospel with everything that moves and then conclude we have fulfilled the Great Commission, nor are we to simply make disciples, dig deep, and assume that we have thus fulfilled the Great Commission. To fulfill the Great Commission requires both quantitative and qualitative strategies.

We live in a very scientific age. Scientists do one thing very, very well. They measure. Thus we can easily become preoccupied with asking the question of how do we know when we’ve fulfilled the Great Commission. If someone were to ask you, how do you know if you’ve filled the Great Commission in your town, in your ministry, what would you say? Most of us, as North Americans, would somehow quote a statistic. We would count something, somewhere, somehow. But as we look at the Scriptures, we don’t get much light on the fulfillment of the Great Commission in a quantitative sense. The Scriptures seem to emphasize far more process than product. Acts chapter 19 verse 10 says this reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus, this reasoning took place for two years so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of God, both Jews and Greeks.

Let me give an example. Suppose you’re in a small town. It’s easy for you to know when you’ve fulfilled the Great Commission because you know everybody in the town. There’s a fellow; we’ll call him Mr. Smith. When Tim Smith was seven years old, he went to your church’s youth group. At eight, he attended a daily Vacation Bible School program, and there he made a decision for Christ. You know he did because you have it on a card in your church files.

By the age of ten, he had somewhat disappeared from the church as his parents divorced. But he stayed in the town since that was the parent that was awarded custody. At the age of fifteen, he came to a high school youth group rally, and again, indicated a decision for Christ. You know it’s so because it’s on the card in your church file. But there was very little follow through with him, and he wasn’t seen of much again.

When he did a service in the army, a letter came to you from a chaplain stating that this fellow had come forward at a service and had made a decision for Christ. Being of the same denomination, he had sent a letter to you hoping that, when his tour of duty was up, you might be able to do some follow through with him. But Tim has just made decisions, indicated decisions, for Christ. Has he really become a believer? Hard to say, isn’t it. He’s definitely
understood the gospel at some level. He’s definitely indicated some sort of response to it. But his lifestyle has not been one that shows indication of Christian life within him.

We need to be very careful that we don’t judge that Tim is or is not a Christian. That judgment is not for us to do. We don’t know all the motives; we don’t know all the information; we are not the judge, 1 Corinthians chapter 4. But we are responsible to be ambassadors. So as we think of the answer to the question, have we fulfilled the Great Commission in our town, let’s recognize that the answer must always be no. Because what if Tim is now 29 years old? He’s done all of these different things, but now what’s happened is that Tim has just gotten divorced. He left the big city he went away to because the judge gave his wife the children, the car, the house, everything. He’s come back home thinking to himself, I have to start over, I’ll go back to my roots and start over there. Now Tim is truly looking for a God who can deliver, for a God who can save, for a way to find forgiveness for what he now understands was not simply sowing a little wild oats, but was a sin so seriously it has destroyed much of his life.

This is when you need to be sharing the gospel with him. Even if the records in your church show that he’s indicated decisions. This may be the time when he truly makes that decision or begins to grow based upon a decision years ago. Let us not think that we fulfilled the Great Commission simply because we’ve achieved certain numerical goals, but let us strive to fulfill the Great Commission and let us continue to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us persevere in fulfilling the Great Commission until our Lord comes back and tells us to stop.

I’d like to give an illustration about the importance of the Holy Spirit in the process of evangelism. I grew up near Buffalo, NY. The Niagara River and its spectacular falls at Niagara Falls are considered one of the seven wonders of the world. The Niagara River itself isn’t very long. It’s only about thirty-five miles, but it carries an enormous amount of water, and so the 162-foot drop of the falls is very impressive. That little thirty-five-mile-long river drains four of the Great Lakes. They have a drainage basin of about 260,000 square miles. The flow from those lakes through that one thirty-five-mile-long river averages about 200,000 cubic feet of water a second.

If you want to know how much water that is, Texas is the largest of the forty-eight lower states. Texans love to brag about how
everything they have is bigger and better. Well, the largest river in the entire state of Texas is the Trinity River. You may remember it from Dallas and different things you’ve seen there. At its mouth, the Trinity River discharges only 4 percent of what the Niagara River does. In other words, it would take twenty-five of the largest river in the state of Texas to equal the flow of this one thirty-five-mile-long river. The largest river in the entire state of Texas, the Sabine, discharges only 4.6 percent of what the Niagara does. It would take over twenty of them to be equal to the Niagara.

In the entire state of Texas, according to the United States Geological Survey Gazetteer of Texas Streams, there are 3,700 rivers and streams. They run for eighty-thousand miles. They drain an area that’s almost exactly the same size as the area drained by the Niagara River. If you take these 3,700 rivers flowing over eighty-thousand miles of stream and river bed and measure their flow when they finally do empty into the sea, you would discover that they would have to flow for 3.5 years to equal the flow of the one Niagara River. Perhaps now you understand the power of that river. Buffalo, the large city near it, was one of the first cities to be electrified because they were able to tap into the immense power of Niagara Falls. They dug great channels through the solid rock so that water could flow through those channels and turn huge generators. These turbine generators produce over four million kilowatts of electricity which is sent as far away as 350 miles.

As a young boy, when this power project was having significant work done on it, I went to see it. We were told repeatedly how this was one of the great marvels of the engineering world, and I was impressed to see Niagara Falls, to see how that power had been harnessed, to see the immense amount of electricity produced. It was, as they say today, totally awesome.

When we got home, I realized that all of that power was being channeled through the wires into my house. As most boys growing up in the 1950s did, I had a little Lionel electric train set. I would run my little train around and round in this little circle loop for hours at a time. Forward and backwards, back fast and slow, round and round it went, and I would think, Niagara Falls is making my train go. But sometimes my train wouldn’t go. I would look at it very carefully to make sure the wires were still screwed onto the transformer and to the little clip on the tracks. I would check all the tracks to make sure none of them had pulled apart so as to breaking the circuit.
Then, most often, I would find what had happened. It was a little metal street light post that I had for decoration. It was only about an inch and a half tall, but sometimes it would tip over. When it tipped over, if it fell the wrong way, it would land on two of the rails. That little inch and a half tall street light post would cut off all of the power of Niagara Falls so that my little train could not go round and round. One little street post; all the power of Niagara Falls rendered useless.

So it is with sin in the life of the believer. It may not seem like a big sin to you, but sin cuts us off from the empowerment of the spirit. Sin keeps the power of the spirit, which is far greater than the power of Niagara Falls, from empowering us to do what He has called us to do. I would encourage you this day to take some time to do a spiritual inventory, to look at your heart, to ask God if there is unconfessed sin, and then to confess that sin and so be empowered with the spirit.

Remember, too, what confession means. Those of you that have had Greek know the Greek word _homologeo_. Literally translated, _homo_, you know that, the same. _Logeo_ means to say or to speak. So to confess is to say or to speak the same. The same as who? The same as God.

When we confess our sins, sometimes we are in fact not confessing. We are just regretting our sins. We are regretting that we were caught. We are regretting that it has implications. We are regretting that someone else was offended. We regret that God doesn’t like it. But we really aren’t saying about it what God says about it. Sometimes it takes quite a bit of thought before we can understand what God says about our sin and why, therefore, it is wrong, and then come to the point where we, too, can agree that it’s wrong.

In a society that has become very post-Christian, in a society that has abandoned many, many biblical ethics and behaviors, it’s very easy to have some things in our life, attitudes or actions, that are quite acceptable in normal society, but are, in fact, what God calls sin. That sin will cut you off from the empowerment of the spirit. Much as that little, metal streetlight post cut my trainset off from the empowerment of Niagara Falls. I urge you to deal with that sin, to confess it. To say the same thing about it that God says about it. To repent of it. _Metanoia_, to change your mind about it. Your mind that once said, oh, that’s okay; it’s not a big deal; everybody does it. To where your mind says about it what God
says about it: it is wrong; it must be rejected; you may not do that and be holy. Take the time this day. Be sure your heart is pure before God. Confess your sins. Turn to God’s spirit to empower you to be a witness.

What have we said so far? We said, in this lecture, that God has given us a mandate for evangelism. That our motivation for evangelism ought not to be things that easily can become manipulations but that our primary motivation must be obedience. Or the flip side of that coin, the love of Christ constrains me, and that although other motivations may have validity and should be understood and considered, only obedience or love of Christ should be the primary motivation.

We have looked at what evangelism is. We gave some working definitions which show the passion with which it grips the heart of those who’ve understood it. Then we looked at the Lausanne Covenant for a working definition of what evangelism is and came to recognize three key ideas: evangelism must not be defined in terms of results, no matter how good and important those results are such as contacts, converts or church members; second, that evangelism must not be defined in terms of methods; but third, that evangelism may, and indeed must, be defined only in terms of the message. That is why we will take several lectures to look at the message of the gospel and how to explain it, how to explain the terms that we use to communicate the good news.

Then we examined the biblical mandate for evangelism and saw an interesting observation that seems rarely, if ever, to be made. And that is that the people whom Christ entrusted with the Great Commission were people like most of you, and certainly like me. Not people who love meeting strangers, not wild-eyed extroverts, but people who were afraid. People who found these things very confusing. People who were not full of certainty and boldness. People like you and me. And that the Holy Spirit can enable people like you and me to share our faith, to be involved in evangelism, to tell the non-Christian the gospel.

We then examined further the mandate for evangelism in the areas of theology and looked at three areas of theology, although many others could have been examined. We saw that evangelism is deeply rooted in the nature and character of God. That if you understand the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, you must understand evangelism. We saw that evangelism is deeply rooted in understanding the nature of man, and evangelism is deeply
rooted in the church.

Finally, we examined the Great Commission and saw that it is both quantitative, Mark 16:15, and qualitative, Matthew 28:19–20. That although we live in an age that does one thing very well, measuring, that’s probably not what we’re supposed to do with the Great Commission. What we’re probably supposed to do is understand that it is a process and that we are to continue to proclaim the gospel to all of creation until our Lord and Savior comes and tells us it’s time to stop.