

## From Here to Timbuktu

**Scripture:** Acts 1:8: But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

**Introduction:** Almost everyone loves to travel, but few people have ever been to Timbuktu. This city of about 20,000, known locally as Tombouctou, is located in west central Africa, in the country of Mali. Somehow through the years, Timbuktu has gotten the reputation of being the most remote and inaccessible place on earth. That isn't true, but one thing we know—the Lord wants to bring the gospel to the primarily-Islamic people of Timbuktu. From here to Timbuktu, the Lord intends for His word to be proclaimed across all the earth. There is no nation, no tribe, no hamlet on the face of the globe that He does not want the gospel to go. Jesus said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In other words, “You will be my witnesses from here to Timbuktu. You will be my witnesses to the last place on earth.” What could compel us to leave hearth and homeland to go to the regions beyond? What would cause us to give our money, our means, our young people, our children, our very lives in this effort? There are three unquenchable motives:

1. **The Character of God.** Missions was throbbing in God's heart when He sent Jesus Christ to die for all the world. As someone said, “Missions didn't really begin with “Go ye into all the world. . . .” It began with “For God so loved the world. . . .” The first two letters of the words *God* and *gospel* are the same: GO! God loves His creation, and He is not willing for any to perish. Before the foundation of the world, He devised a plan of redemption, and we are His ambassadors in its proclamation.
  2. **The Commandment of Christ.** Each of the four Gospels contains the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45–49; John 20:21). So often, when we tell our children to do something, we preface it with that word “Go!” It is a word of commandment and commission. It's a word that frequently occurs throughout the Bible. In Matthew's Gospel, for example, the word “go” occurs 70 times:
    - A. Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you (8:13).
    - B. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:6).
    - C. Go and tell John the things which you hear and see (11:4).
    - D. Go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite (22:9).
    - E. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead (28:7).
    - F. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations (28:19).
  3. **The Condition of the Lost.** One of the most eloquent pleas for missions in the Bible comes from the lips of a dead man—the rich man in hell who lifted up his voice pleading for someone to go to his brothers and warn them of the coming wrath (Luke 16:27–28). There are currently 6.1 billion people on earth, and more than 5 billion of them are lost. The best calculations of missiologists tell us that about 600 million people claim a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. There are an additional 1.4 billion “cultural Christians” who are associated in some way with the Christian religion. Another 2.5 billion people are non-Christian, but have some access to the gospel message. But more than 1.6 billion people have virtually no access to the gospel.
- Conclusion:** The Lord expects us to go, to pray, to give, and to be globally-minded Christians. In his book, *The Great Omission*, Robertson McQuilkin points out that in the days before William Carey, the father of the modern Protestant missionary movement, the Movarians from Herrnhut considered a support base of four adequate to keep one missionary at the front. Using that formula, America's forty million evangelicals could support ten million overseas workers. Instead, there are currently about 33,000 fully-supported Christian workers from America serving overseas for more than four years. “The truth is,” says McQuilkin, “less than one percent of full-time Christian workers are engaged in evangelical ministry among the unevangelized of the world. Is this the way the Commander-in-Chief would assign troops? Or is someone not listening?”