

THE GREAT OMISSION

Our Lord made clear his primary purpose for coming into this world when he said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He went about doing good (Acts 10:38), healing people of various maladies (Luke 7:22), seeing to the physical needs of the multitudes (John 6), and even made close friends of some who followed him (John 11:5). But all of these things were done that he might accomplish his purpose—bringing souls to God. As he prepared for his return to the right hand of the throne of God, Jesus left final instructions for those who would take up his cause. We often refer to these final words of Jesus as the Great Commission. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt.28:19). “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). We often pay close attention to the words of a loved one, and even more so when they be the final words from the lips of one we love so dearly. That being said, why is it that we who claim to love Jesus so deeply refuse to comply with these final words of the Savior? We have turned the Great Commission into the Great Omission, for we are failing miserably in carrying out the Lord’s command. We may salve our consciences by claiming that we as a congregation are involved in supporting numerous mission works and evangelistic efforts. However, we must not think that we can evangelize by proxy, thus fulfilling our obligation to God. I am thankful to have a part in helping various mission efforts and evangelistic outreaches by my regular contributions on the Lord’s day, but this in no wise frees me of my responsibility to evangelize those around me.

Alas, all is not lost. There is much good that can be done, if we will put the “C” back into the Great Commission. That requires that we put Christ back upon the throne of our hearts and allow him to rule our lives (Eph.3:17). If we are going to spread the gospel in this community, to our neighbors, co-workers, friends, relatives, etc., then we must exalt Christ in our lives. Before we can effectively teach others, we must sanctify, or set apart, the Lord Jesus in our hearts (1 Pet.3:15). Then, and only then, will we be ready to give an answer to those who need to hear the gospel. Until Jesus truly rules our lives, we will lack the desire to take his message to the world (Gal.2:20). If we are to evangelize the world for Jesus, then we must put the “C” of commitment back into the Great Commission. A congregation not committed to evangelism is a congregation that is doomed to die, not to mention being in direct violation of the sole purpose for which the church exists. The commitment must come first of all from individual members who have a desire to see the church grow and prosper. As the commitment to teach publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:20) grows within us, the congregation will grow in spirit and in number, and the enthusiasm for doing the Lord’s work will spill over to others. Have we committed ourselves to this cause (2 Tim.1:12)?

Patrick Morrison