
The Story of Jesus

Published By Evangelist Van Billingsley

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Do You Love God?

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” -- 1 John 5:3

John echoes the words of Jesus who said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). This is a simple and straight forward test and demonstration of our love for Him. Many Christians serve God out of fear, duty or self-righteousness which becomes bondage. When we truly love Him, it becomes our heart’s desire to please and obey Him. As long as we look at the commandments of God as a bunch of rules or just do’s and don’ts, we’ll never live a life that is well pleasing in His sight. To the Christian, the laws of God’s Word should not be simply regu-

lations of right and wrong, but opportunities and tips on how we may please Him. These laws and commandments reveal to us the ways of a Holy God, “For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8). When we learn His ways, we will delight in the Law of God.

John follows this with the comment, “His commandments are not grievous.” The fact is, they may make the carnal man uncomfortable; they do not fit in with the ways of the world, but there is nothing hard or unreasonable about the way God wants His children to be different from the world. Love and obedience go hand in hand in God’s Word. You cannot have one without the other. How much do you love God? --VB

OUR COMMISSION: THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY

There are many times Jesus spoke to others in the Gospels when His words may only have some small application to us. Other times He spoke to His disciples and His words apply directly to us as delivered through the scripture. Then there were times in which He physically spoke to the Disciples present with Him, yet He was literally speaking through the record of inspired scripture and through the ages to all Christians to follow until the end is come: His words were spoken as well to us today as they were spoken to Peter, James and John. One of those times was in what we know as “The Great Commission.” *And Jesus came*

and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Mt 28:18-20). This is truly the greatest commission ever given to man, but since it is

-- continued on page 3

Inside This Edition...

~ **Opening Commentary**, cover

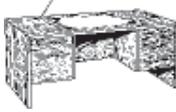
Do You Love God?

~ **Featured Sermon**, cover & p.3 & 4

Our Commission

~ **From the Editor’s Desk**, p.2

From the Desk of the Editor



These past few months we have been very busy with the changes God has been leading us through. In our Fall Newsletter we told you of some of these things God is bringing to pass. Over the past few weeks and months we have moved into our new mission location and I have closed the office of the part time business I've depended on over the past eight years or so for support. For now, I will still have to do some work in my trade on the side and other occasional labor to make ends meet, but all this is working toward focusing on God's work full time.

With several weeks of traveling ahead, I've been consumed and almost overwhelmed for the past several weeks with the work of setting up our new facilities and cleaning out the old house before the bulldozers arrive. God has provided a building with affordable rent to house our mission and headquarters for my evangelism ministry.

I am very excited about what this has allowed us to do with our mission work. We are in our fifth year with this work and we held our first service at the new location on February 12, 2006. At this facility we've been able to set up a permanent chapel with all the furnishings and a separate Sunday School and multi purpose area. We are grateful for several donations made by churches and individuals to make this possible. We've had a pulpit donated by Oakside Baptist, our home church in LaGrange, GA. Callaway Baptist in LaGrange, GA donated pews, several sheets of drywall were donated by Rogers Houston of Valley, AL, a water heater and some other needed fixtures were donated by Jim Ivey and Paige Collins of Valley,

AL, and a small freezer was donated by Vilma Hill of Lanett, AL.

As our mission work grows, we are considering a name change to better identify this work. It was originally named "The Story of Jesus Children's Mission" and we later shortened that to simply "The Children's Mission." Now as we have more adequate facilities and are trying to reach the entire families of our children, we have become more of a mission church. We are considering several names that will reflect the nature of our work and a further description after the name will read "Children's Ministry and Family Outreach."

With all this work to do and the traveling ahead in my evangelism, I covet your prayers. We are in desperate need of support for the mission and my personal expenses and evangelism as well. I will be spending some time doing deputation for these needs in the future. I am presently doing God's work full time and living by faith, but I have no regular support or income for this. God has supplied many needs, but I know he has a plan to provide for doing His work continuously. Please pray for us as we seek His will and way to support the work He has placed before us. Once we get our new facilities in order, I also need more meetings in my evangelism schedule.

Not everyone reading this will be able to support us or be in a position to use me in the ministry, but all of you can lift us up in your prayers. Thank you for remembering us when you enter the Throne of Grace and let me know if we may serve you in any way.

A Servant of Christ,
Evangelist Van Billingsley

Our Commission

(continued from cover) --

given directly to us, I prefer to call it "Our Commission." This is a personal commission. To add to the greatness of this commission, we should consider the commissioner who is the Son of God, or God in the flesh. He prefaces His command by saying "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." No commission has any ground without authority behind the commissioner, and this commissioner has all power and certainly all authority.

As important as this commission is, it is often used only in part. Though winning the lost is the first and, no doubt, the most important part of this commission, it is in no way all of the commission. To win the lost and do nothing else for them is not fulfilling the commission. Let's examine this commission in its entirety.

The words "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" refer to preaching the Gospel. It's this single phrase that refers to winning the lost. This first aspect of our commission is to give **Deliverance to the Condemned**. To accomplish this we must tell them that a **Sin Debt is owed, Salvation is offered and Surrender is ordered**. The Gospel is only good news to those who receive it. To let them know a sin debt is owed, we must realize **the Gospel includes the condemnation sin**.

Today man justifies every form of wickedness imaginable. We are often accused of not preaching the Gospel when we preach against the wickedness in the world, but no man will see himself as a sinner without the condemnation of sin. Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17b; cf. Lk 15:7; 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15). We must inform man that he is a sinner in need of salvation and God's Word says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

To let them know salvation is offered, we must preach to them Jesus and "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"

(Acts 4:12b; cf. John 10:9; John 14:6, Matt. 7:15). In this, **the Gospel includes the correction of false teaching**. Here too, we are often criticized, but this is the Gospel.

To let them know that surrender is ordered, we must realize **the Gospel includes the conversion of the believer**. This means we must preach repentance. Some say repentance is not important, or they down play the word and substitute it with "believe," but Jesus said "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3&5). How can I not preach repentance when John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), Jesus (Luke 13:3,5), The Disciples (Mark 6:12), Peter (Acts 3:19), and Paul (Acts 17:30) all preached repentance for salvation. Repentance means a change of mind or a change of heart; In reference to salvation, it is obvious this is a change of heart about God and our sin. It is often said repentance means to turn around and go in the other direction, but that is wrong; that is the definition for conversion in the Bible. It is interesting however that Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3), so this too is required. Peter placed the two words together by saying, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). The difference is demonstrated with the little word "Be" which is always used in front of the word "converted." This puts it in the passive tense meaning we do not do it, but it is done to us. We can never change ourselves in our condition of sin, but when we repent and turn ourselves over to God, He will convert us and make us a new creature. Repentance is our part; God will convert us, but not until we repent.

Looking back to our text, the next phrase says, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." For "Baptizing them" to be part of our commission, it obviously has great importance. Though we know this

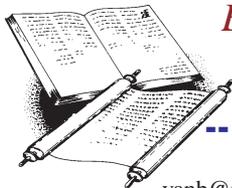
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act plays no part in getting us to heaven, careful study reveals that it is a picture of and represents everything that does. Being commanded to do this in our commission means the second aspect of this commission is to give **Direction to the Convert**. We are not only to get them saved but we are to give them direction as to what is to follow.

Being the first command to a new believer, baptism is the **Initial Step** for the new convert. It's the first step of obedience in a life of obedience. It also helps the believer to **Identify with the Saviour**. This is an open and public testimony for the new believer. Then it gives an **Image of Salvation**, because it represents the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ, as well as the death to sin and resurrection to walk in newness of life for the convert. The page will not allow me to elaborate, but the most direct meaning and interpretation of water baptism is the physical but figurative act representing the spiritual baptism of the Holy Spirit upon salvation. God's word is filled with physical acts or objects representing actual spiritual things which are the true or real thing, such as the tabernacle being a shadow of things in heaven, the Lord's Supper representing the flesh and blood of Christ and the local church representing the Body of Christ. New converts may not understand all that salvation involves, but should be given direction to understand what has taken place in their life! We are commissioned to give direction to the convert.

The final aspect of our commission is found in the words "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This means we are commissioned to give **Discipleship to the Christian**. The words "all things" leaves nothing out. We are to declare all the counsel of God and it is required to fulfill our commission. We must begin by teaching them to **love Christ**. Jesus said "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Obedience for any other reason is vain and meaningless. We show our love for Christ by obeying His Commandments. Jesus said in Matthew 5:19 that we are to do and teach the **least commandments**. Now we see this is included in our commission as well. Then we are to teach the children of God to live a **life of commitment**. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2).

Without doing all these things, we are not fulfilling "The Great Commission" or "Our Commission." This may seem like a hard task, but Jesus closed out His words by saying "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It's a comfort to know that He'll be with us every step of the way. Let's all fulfill "Our Commission." --VB



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proclaiming

The Story of Jesus

-- A Missionary to our Homeland --

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