

The Story of Jesus

Published By Evangelist Van Billingsley

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Our English Bible: 400 Years

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” — Isaiah 40:8

Our English Bible, The King James Version, or The Authorized Version, has stood for 400 years. It

was faithfully translated out of the original tongues with all previous translations diligently compared.

This translation was made from the family of manuscripts which had been passed down without interruption from the time of their inspiration.

“Our Commission”

by Evangelist Van Billingsley

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. — Matthew 28:18-20

These verses are among the better known passages of scripture, being recognized, if not known, by almost anyone familiar with Christianity. The fact is, just like “love God with all thy heart and love thy neighbor as thyself” then hanging the entire law upon these two commands covers everything about living as a Christian should, our passage at hand covers virtually everything we are to do in the gospel ministry. I believe only God could speak such thorough and complete truths with so few words, but it’s not my point here to defend the deity of Christ.

This passage is commonly called “The Great Commission,” but as Jesus spoke these words to the apostles, then the Spirit of God placed it into inspired scripture, these words are given to us just as they were given to the apostles. Through the pages of His Word, He speaks to us. For this cause, I like to make it a little more personal by call-

ing this “**Our Commission.**”

This truly is the commission given to us which outlines everything we are to do in the gospel ministry. A commission is the orders given to one who is to carry out a mission, such as soldiers, ambassadors, or delegates who represent some group, body or entity. God’s Word uses all these analogies for the Christian. We are to act as all these things for Christ and this is our commission to do so. This is a personal commission and it is our commission.

Sadly, many today focus on one portion or another while neglecting the rest as though it is unimportant or subordinate to the other. This entire passage must

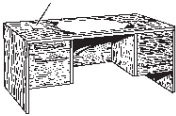
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Our Ministry News...

From the Desk of the Editor



Once again, after a slow winter, we need your prayers that our needs will be met. For Many of the trips ahead I do not expect a love offering, so we trust God to meet those needs. I also must be back home every weekend to fulfill the responsibilities at our mission church which is in its tenth year.

I always try to sound positive, but I must also be honest. Much of our support has dwindled for our mission church and our bills are behind. The case is the same in our personal area. We need your prayers that God's will be made clear as we must get more support, or drastic changes must be made. If God wants to turn the page in our ministry endeavors, we are ready to follow, but we need His lead-

ing, open doors, and we still have needs to be met regardless.

We've begun our "Camp Countdown" in which we promote our trip to Living Waters Baptist Youth Camp in June and raise money to pay for the camp fees of our children who would not be able to attend without this financial help. Please let us know if you can help in this area. More information will be on our website throughout this time.

We continue to work with several other missionaries and ministries with the internet ministry. We hope these are a blessing to others.

Please pray for us as we endeavor to do all our Lord places before us.

A Servant of Christ,
Evangelist Van Billingsley

(... from cover) -- **"Our Commission"** be followed in order to fulfill our commission! It falls into a natural outline enclosed between bookends providing two great promises serving as the natural introduction and conclusion to the outline.

Jesus introduces our commission by saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He is the commissioner. One must have the proper authority, rank and power to issue a commission. Jesus declares His authority and power in these words describing the unending, unlimited, infallible, almighty power with the superlative yet simple, "All power." This leaves nothing out. This is not simply a metaphor, nor an exaggerated expression; this is the literal measure of power given unto Christ — "All power." All there is to give; all that exists; all that is required or needed. Once He establishes this, He says, "Go ye therefore."

This is the reason we are to go. This is the authority under which we are commissioned. This is truly the "Great Commission" because it has been issued by the "Great Commissioner," and this great commission is our commission.

The first of the three commands in our commission says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." What we are to teach here is assumed and should be clearly understood. It is no hidden mystery that this portion deals with the message of salvation, the gospel. That message is that men are sinners in need of a Savior, who that Savior must be, and what must be done to accept Him. This means we must carry **deliverance to the condemned**. (I will interject some points from another message entitled "It is the Gospel," which deals with those things so many claim are not part of the Gospel message.) They must be taught that *a sin debt is*

owed. This means the condemnation of sin, all sin, is part of the Gospel. With more space, I would have much to say here. They must be taught that *salvation is offered*. Since Jesus is the only way, this means the gospel includes the correction and confrontation of false doctrine. This is why so much of the New Testament is devoted to exposing false doctrine and warning of false prophets. No matter how unpopular, we must do the same. Then they must be taught that *a surrender is ordered*. This means the gospel includes the conversion of the believer. Salvation is all of God, but there is one thing we must do; we must receive Him. No matter how diligently one avoids the facts, there are conditions to this reception. Jesus taught that one must both repent and that one must be converted to become a child of God. Peter placed these together in his message in Acts chapter three, saying, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. . . ." Repent means a change of mind or a change of heart. We should not add anything to that nor take anything away. This change being in the heart or mind excludes works, but one destroys repentance when he waters it down to simply changing his mind about whether or not he wants to be a Christian. Without space to expound on this, I'll just say, "Repentance demanded of man by God, whether for salvation or not, is always in reference to mans attitude concerning sin in his life." While we stand unable to change or become righteous, we must surrender to the one who will change us. The word converted in relation to salvation is always preceded by the little word "be" or in some other form placing it in the passive tense. We cannot convert ourselves; we must be converted. We must come to Him in repentance allowing Him to convert us. Conversion is salvation! Those who turn repentance into works place conversion before salvation. In like manner, the Calvin-

ist, who strongly opposes the aforementioned false doctrine, still teaches that conversion must come first, before one can even accept Christ. The only part he gets right is that conversion must be done by the Holy Spirit. Then on the other side are those who teach what is often called "easy believism." They teach that if a person says some magic words as though it is a potion or a spell, he has to be saved. They further teach that conversion is then some gradual process which may never happen, placing conversion after salvation. All these are false teachings! We must teach the truth. Again, conversion is salvation. We do not become sinless, but if we be in Christ, we will become a new creature. That's also called "regeneration." This is all step one of our commission.

The next order in our commission comes in the continued words, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This is giving **direction to the convert**. This is often referred to as the first step of obedience to Christ, or the *initial step*. They are saved now, so what next. I do not expect my readers to have a problem understanding that this is not part of salvation, but a step of obedience proclaiming *identity with Christ* and that we have put our trust in His death, burial and resurrection as well as picturing what has taken place to us spiritually as we were baptized into His body by the Spirit. Physically, baptism is an *image of salvation*, which is spiritual. It is not even given here as something to teach them or get them to do, but something we are to do to them. I do not imply forcibly baptizing them nor neglecting to teach them the meaning, but that we are to show them how to take the first step as a child of God. There is some hands on, personal instruction required immediately.

Where the second order is an immediate

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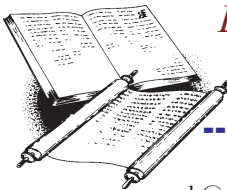
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command to carry out after winning someone to Christ, the last is a continuing responsibility which never comes to an end. Jesus finished His orders saying, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We are ordered to continue with the **discipleship of the Christian**. We are not to pick and choose what we deem acceptable, nor what seems relevant or fitting for our day, but teach them to observe all things. We are so frequently admonished to love and teach love; well, this is it. This is the *love of Christ*. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" John 14:15. The apostle John later wrote, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" 1 John 5:3. It's all about loving Him! I mentioned at the beginning that Jesus said the first and great commandment is to love God and the second is to love our neighbor. When we apply the concept of hanging the whole law on these two commands, most people have no problem with those commands dealing with our neighbor. Even the lost man understands that if it hurts or wrongs another person, it is wrong. Today's Christians have a problem accepting that something is wrong if it does not harm another person, but we are given many commands simply because that's the way God wants His people to be different. These are the commands most rejected and tossed aside by

the modern Christian, yet it is this category which Jesus placed under the first and great commandment. Then we try to place certain commandments, which we call rules or dos and don'ts, in the category of non-essentials, trivial, unimportant, or irrelevant. We must remember that Jesus taught us to keep the *least commandments*, and teach men so, just as our commission orders. Not only are we as Christians to live this way, but preacher friend, our orders from Christ state, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This promotes a *life of commitment*. Paul wrote, "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."

Our commission places upon us a tremendous responsibility and just as we can not save ourselves nor live holy by our own strength, we cannot fulfill our commission under our own strength and power. The one who declared "All power" to be given unto himself concluded by saying, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Leaning upon Him and trusting in the arm of His strength, we can each fulfill our commission!

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