

The Great Commission

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Matthew 28 we find what is known as the Great Commission, where Jesus commanded His disciples to go into the all the world and make disciples of all nations. Beginning in verse 16, we read:

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-20)

Jesus commanded the eleven apostles to preach the Gospel, making disciples of all nations, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentile races as well. This Gospel is the Good News of God’s provision for the forgiveness of man’s sins, which comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. His blood shed on Calvary’s cross was the atoning sacrifice that purchased reconciliation to God for everyone who believes in Him (Revelation 5:9). Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations applied not only to the eleven apostles whom He addressed at that time; it applies to all believers.

As we are considering sharing our faith with others, we should also consider another teaching that Jesus gave to us in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not give

what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” (Matthew 7:6).

To be obedient to our Lord’s command here, we are going to have to make some assessments as to where the “dogs” and “swine” are, and where they are not. This means that we should not approach just anyone to share our faith, because if we do, we may be approaching one of those whom Jesus referred to as dogs or swine, and they may indeed “turn and tear us to pieces”. Instead, let us look for an open door of opportunity to share our faith as God provides such opportunities.

We should also understand when sharing our faith that the Bible teaches us that God has mercy on some, and the rest He hardens (Romans 9:18). Unregenerate man does not have the capacity or ability to receive the Gospel message unless it has been granted to Him by God to do so (John 6:65). The ones to whom God shows mercy are effectually called to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, through the hearing of the Gospel message (John 6:44). As a result of God’s sovereign choice and His calling, these will all come to Christ (John 6:37). The others, whom the Scripture says that God hardens, are left in their sins and have no hope of understanding or receiving the Gospel message (Matthew 13:11, John 8:42-47, 10:22-26).

We should not volunteer to share our faith with anyone who is a member of a pagan faith, unless they show a sincere interest in the Gospel message, and because they are aware that we are Christians, they approach us with questions about our faith. Those who display an open hostility toward the Gospel we should avoid, and not give them what is sacred or cast our pearls to them, while at the same time understanding that they may not always remain hostile to the Gospel of Christ. We should also avoid sharing our faith with those who are atheistic and display a callous indifference to the Gospel message.

This is not to say that someone who is indifferent or even overtly hostile toward the Gospel will not at some point in the future come to faith in Christ. A prime example of such a person is Saul of Tarsus, who would later become the Apostle Paul. Saul was travelling on the Damascus Road, on his way to continue his efforts to persecute the Church, when he was struck down off his horse and called to faith in Christ apart from any decision of his own, even while he was still intent on opposing the Gospel (Acts 9:1-9, Acts 22:1-10). Sometimes those who are openly hostile toward the Gospel message are indeed numbered among God’s elect. In His time, God will call these individuals to faith in His Son, just as was the case with the Saul.

Peter exhorted each of us as believers when he wrote: “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” (1 Peter 3:15). While we should always be ready to share our faith, giving an answer to those who see the hope that we have, we should never worry about our presentation or about how awkward we may be in sharing with them. Our own eloquence, presentation skills, knowledge of the Scriptures, or persuasiveness has nothing at all to do with whether someone will be saved.

If those with whom we are sharing our faith are numbered among God’s elect, they will be brought to faith in Christ in God’s time. If we have shared our faith with them, then we have been given the privilege of being used by God to help bring the Gospel message to them, and we will have helped to fulfill the Great Commission.

Whether those with whom we share our faith ever come to believe in Christ or not, the sharing of our faith brings the outward call of the Gospel message to those who hear it. The results, however, are entirely up to God, and His word, as it has gone out through us as we share our faith, will not return to Him void but will accomplish the purpose which He intends (Isaiah 55:10-11). In sharing our faith, not giving what is sacred to dogs or casting our pearls before swine as Jesus said in Matthew 7:6, but as God opens doors of opportunity, we are obedient to the Great Commission.

Therefore, when we share our faith with others, the “seed” of the Gospel message that we share with them will fall upon different types of “soil”, so to speak, as we learned in the parable of the sower. However, the only place where individuals will in God’s time be brought to faith in Christ is where the seed falls upon the “good soil”, which is to say where the seed of the Gospel message is proclaimed in the hearing of God’s elect.

Jesus said to His disciples: “...The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38). With the Great Commission, Jesus commanded all of us who are brought to faith in Him to be involved as workers in His harvest field, sharing our faith. We can share our faith in different ways, and at times we may not even be aware that through our actions which others observe, we are bearing witness to our faith in Christ.

We can share our faith one-on-one with someone who shows an interest, someone who may perceive something different and good in us. These, knowing that we are Christians, may want to know more about our faith in Christ.

We can share our faith with others when they see us “taking the high road” so to speak. When unbelievers who know us to be Christians see this, they may wonder if it is not our faith in Christ that causes us to act differently, doing what many would consider to be “the right thing to do”, when doing something else would be much more expedient and personally profitable.

We can also be obedient to the Great Commission by financially supporting those who preach and teach the Gospel message of the forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ and through Him alone. As Jesus also said elsewhere: “...the worker deserves his wages.” (Luke 10:7)

Even though the Gospel is proclaimed widely in the world today, and many hear the message outwardly, only God’s elect will be effectually drawn to faith in Christ (John 6:37, 44, Romans 8:29-30, others). These elect, these chosen by God, are symbolized by the “good soil” in Jesus’ parable of the sower. When the seed of the word of God is sown in their hearts, these and only these are the ones who are able to hear the word and understand it (Matthew 13:8, 23). Having received God’s call to faith in Christ, we will always manifest our genuine faith by good works done in obedience to the word of God, and these good works are themselves fruit born to His glory (John 15:8).

God is going to save those whom He has foreknown from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11), and there is nothing anyone can do to change that (Romans 8:29-30). Jesus has, with His command to go and make disciples of all nations, given to us as His people the privilege of working in His harvest field to bring the Gospel message to His elect, who will themselves as we have done before them, hear the word, understand it, and yield a harvest, bearing spiritual fruit to the glory of God our Father.

