

Matthew 28:18-20 THE GREAT COMMISSION OR THE PRIME DIRECTIVE

Captain Kirk and his crew of the starship Enterprise on Star Trek followed something called the **Prime Directive**. Obeying the Prime Directive meant that when they explored new worlds and new civilizations and “boldly went where no man has gone before,” *they were not to interfere in the life and culture of the new places they discovered*. They were not to even mention that other worlds exist or that space travel is possible. They were not to interfere with anything at all.

Even if they could help these struggling creatures, they were not to violate the Prime Directive; rather, the people were to find their own solutions to their problems. Were they dying from a disease? Let them find their own cures. Even if they were able to relieve the suffering on a newly discovered planet, they were not to interfere at all with the culture.

This has also become the philosophy of much of the Christian Church over the last 20 years, when it comes to missions, only we don't call it the Prime Directive; we call it “Post-modernism.” Post-modernism says that there is no such thing as objective truth. Whatever you believe to be true can be true for you. Truth is relative—we cannot really know anything for sure. Therefore all the religions are equally valid. We disagree.

Jesus did not say, “Do not interfere, let people grope in the darkness to find Me.” Rather He said, “**Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you.**” Help everyone in every way that you can, and especially tell them about Me.”

Does the church today follow the Great Commission or the Prime Directive? One is from our Lord. The other is from the Devil. Today I want to discuss 1) how many Christians and much of the Church have been seduced into following the Prime Directive rather than the clear words of our Savior. Then secondly, we will look at the Great Commission and see the power that God gives us to accomplish the assignment.

I. The idea of the Prime Directive is very prevalent in our society today, with devastating consequences. And the idea has spread into the Church itself.

It seems that the **World Council of Churches** has exchanged the Great Commission for the Prime Directive. Most of the larger U.S. denominations and many foreign church bodies belong to WCC. Our church body, the LCMS, for various reasons, has not joined. This group of churches has declared a moratorium on missions. They have stopped sending missionaries to foreign countries to bring people to Christ. They would still send them to help with physical needs, help with farming, digging wells, eradicating malaria, etc, but they feel that it is judgmental to send missionaries to other countries. The WCC feels that sending Christian missionaries would send the message that other religions are not the right ones.

Some Christian denominations have stopped trying to win Jewish people for Christ. They say it is insulting to Jewish people to try to convert them to Christianity. Some Christian groups think that God

has a plan of salvation for Jewish people other than Christ and the cross. But Jesus says, "Make disciples of ALL NATIONS," including the Jewish nation.

This idea of the Prime Directive either reflects or causes changes in how Americans think. No longer do people think that there is truth—**objective truth**. By this I mean, people no longer think that something that is true is true for all people in all situations. Rather, our culture tends to think that something is true, *if it is true for you*.

An example of this is if I say that something is **red** and you say something is **green**. These are contradictory statements; they cannot both be true. **Both may be wrong, but they cannot both be true, that is, according to the idea of truth**. But today, people are rejecting the concept of truth. To say it very crassly, we are beginning to think that something may be red and green at the same time.

People still believe in objective truth in science, but in the world of religion, this idea is thrown out the window. People want to think that everybody is correct in their religion, even when the ideas are contradictory. "Whatever works for you" is what people say about religion; "Whatever makes you happy." But Jesus says, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one can come to the Father but by Me.**" "Wide is the gate that leads to destruction and narrow the gate that leads to eternal life."

In our society, an odd thing has occurred. It is harder to say that you are right than it is to say that you are wrong. It is difficult for us to admit to mistakes. But it is even harder to say that we are right and say that someone else is wrong. We find it very hard to disagree with people; we want to be agreeable. To stand our ground makes us narrow-minded and stubborn. We should not be obnoxious in our dealings with people with whom we disagree; but the Bible says that we should witness with gentleness and respect. *But too often we give away the farm and do not witness clearly to our Savior.*

This happens within Christian families too. A Christian parent is heard to say, "We are just going to let our child decide what religion they want to follow when they grow up. We do not want to prejudice them toward Christianity. We will let them choose."

Yes, children *will* make their own decisions when they are older, but God has charged parents to teach their children diligently about their God and Savior. The frightening thing is that people, because of their sinful nature, are more likely to remain in their sin than to come into the saving light of Christ. Indeed, without the Holy Spirit, it is not possible to choose to be a Christian. *Our first exercise of the Great Commission is to be in our families.*

The **Prime Directive is of the Devil** because it denies Christ and His saving work on the cross, and instead promotes the idea that a person may be saved through works. To say that a person can believe anything he wants and be saved without faith in Christ is obviously a denial of our Savior. For us to believe this and say this is an insult to Christ. It makes everything that Jesus did FOR US unnecessary. It makes His birth and His baptism, His suffering and death all for nothing, because we are saying that a person is okay without Jesus. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

All other religions in the world say that a person is made right with God by what they do. Christianity

teaches that a person is made right with God by the free forgiveness of sins, won for us by Christ. Paul answers this question by saying in Galatians, **"If righteousness comes by the works of the Law, then Christ died in vain."**

THE RESULT OF THE PRIME DIRECTIVE IS DEATH. Forgiveness comes to those who believe in Christ. Jesus said to Nicodemus, **"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit."** Also in John 3, **"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."** In Acts is written, **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** People without Christ are doomed under the wrath of God forever. Hell is not even a possibility the Prime Directive, but it *is* a teaching of the Bible. The Prime Directive says to let people take their chances when it comes to heaven and hell. The Great Commission says to snatch every soul from the jaws of hell and the power of Satan by the wonderful message of Jesus, the Lamb of God who suffered hell for us so that we might never see the unquenchable fires.

II. The Prime Directive is not the loving thing to do. We need to look again to the Great Commission. **WE ARE TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION IN JESUS.** It is the loving thing to do to tell others of the wonderful forgiveness that we have in Christ. Christ has given us a commission.

We are to **"teach them to observe all things"** that Jesus teaches us to do. We are to proclaim all the doctrines of our Savior. When we do this, we find that it is a tapestry of grace. Dr. David Scar taught us that "all theology is Christology." Every teaching of the Bible points to Christ and how He has won the forgiveness of sins for us. In the center of this beautiful tapestry is Jesus on the cross. This part alone tells the message that your sins have been washed away. Radiating out from the cross in every direction are all the other beautiful doctrines that adorn and complement the cross at the center. Each part, every doctrine, says that God forgives you in Jesus Christ.

When our text says, **"in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"** it is a comfort to know that each of person of the Trinity is working through the church to take Christ to the Nations and the Nations to the Church.

"Go and make disciples by baptizing." Baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit by which He delivers to the baptized all the benefits of Christ's holy life, His death on the cross and His resurrection. The Bible is from beginning to end a clear testimony of the coming of Christ, His arrival and His coming again. The Office of the Keys tells you that the forgiveness announced to you by the pastor in the absolution is "just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself." The Lord's Supper is given for you, "for the remission of sins." Even the preaching of the Law is to bring us to Christ, as Paul writes: **"The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."** The doctrine of the church, indeed, is a tapestry of grace, every color and thread crafted by God to testify of God's saving love in Jesus.

Christ assures of His power and authority in His words, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been**

given to Me." Satan has been completely defeated. He is a lion on a chain that can only do what God permits him to do. God is in control. Satan does not rule. Jesus has all authority and He charges us to spread His Good News of the forgiveness of sins to all people.

Jesus also gives us **His presence** to accomplish this large task. "**I am with you always, even to the close of the age.**" He is standing by your side when you tell of Him. We have His promise that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to speak. The church is here to help you in your witness. If someone has questions you cannot answer, you can invite them to church to hear the Word of God proclaimed. You can ask the pastors and other people in the congregation to help to answer those difficult questions. You can contact Lutheran Hour Ministries for materials to share with you friends. You can participate in the Great Commission by supporting Lutheran Hour Ministries.

We always remember what the Bible says about the power of the Word of God:

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void. But it shall accomplish what I please and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

We need not be afraid. It may not seem like it is accomplishing anything, but the Word of God will accomplish that for which it is sent. The effect may not be apparent for some time, but the seed has been planted.

We see the **results of the Prime Directive**. Western society is decaying because the Word of Christ is not reaching the masses. When we look at the Prime Directive, we see the encroaching darkness of sin and evil and people lost in the darkness. *It is a loveless thing to let people remain in their spiritual darkness.*

Our Savior's Great Commission is the message of free forgiveness in Him. He wants the whole world to be Christian, not by force or coercion but by the power of His Word and so He tells us to teach everything. This we do gladly, for all that Jesus taught us relates to our forgiveness, a tapestry of grace—a tapestry that is so beautiful that we continue to study the masterpiece, and tell us others that they may the joy of salvation too.

THE GREAT COMMISSION OR THE PRIME DIRECTIVE.

Intro: Star Trek's idea of the Prime Directive versus the Great Commission.

I. The prevalence is wide and result of the Prime Directive is death.

A. Examples

1. The WCC has declared a moratorium on missions
2. Some Christian denominations have stopped trying to win Jews for Christ.
3. We have lost the idea of objective truth.
 - a. We are like Pilate
 - b. This is influence of Eastern Religion
 - c. It is easier to say that we are wrong than we are right.
4. Christian parents, "We will let our children choose"
 - a. They will likely choose death because of sin

B. It denies Christ and grace, promotes works.

C. The result of the Prime Directive is death

1. Acts 4:12
2. John 3:36, 3:3-5.

II. The Great Commission is spreading *the* Good News.

A. Christ has commanded us to convert all people

1. Definition of commission
 - a. also what it is not.
2. "as you go" - witness to all people in your daily lives.
3. "make disciples", not "teach."

B. The message is of Good News.

1. All doctrine is a tapestry of Grace.
2. the Name of the Triune God.
3. and Baptism.

C. God also gives us the power to accomplish this assignment.

1. "All authority"
2. I am with you always
3. Is 55:11, Hebrews 4:12