

THE SIN OF OMISSION

The word translated “sin” in the New Testament is from the Greek word *hamartia*. Although the etymology is unclear, the primary sense of the verb form *hamartano* is “[to] cause to be alongside instead of on target” and implies “wrongdoing against humans or deity.” In this sense, “sin” is “a missing of the mark” or “a misdeed that creates liability for the agent.”¹ The marksman can miss his target by shooting over the mark or by falling short of it. In the same way, we can sin by either going beyond “the teaching of Christ” (see 2 John 9-11) or by falling short of what God requires. Concerning the latter, James wrote, “Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin” (James 4.17).² All of us, at times in our lives, are guilty of this “sin of omission.” We fail to do the right thing when it is needed.

The tragedy of the sin of omission is that it neglects God’s instruction to work for his kingdom. Talent is wasted. Spiritual growth is hindered. And many because of such neglect will be lost. The tragedy of the sin of omission also can be seen in the final end of the rich man (Luke 16.19-31), the foolish virgins (Matthew 25.1-13), the one talent man (Matthew 25.14-30), and those on the left hand of Christ at the judgment (Matthew 25.31-46). All these were guilty of the sin of omission. It will be a tragedy to face our Lord at judgment in the condition of those mentioned above. May God help all of us to be workers for his kingdom. Thanks be to our God for his incredible mercy and grace.

¹Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19.

²*New Revised Standard Version* (1989).