

Commitment

“I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2 MKJV).

Hear me now, you fence-sitters, you who prefer to take the middle road or the well-worn road that crowds use. Do you not know that such a road is as perilous as, if not more so than, the road of opposition? Didn't the Lord Jesus Christ say, “He that gathers not with Me scatters abroad”? Did He not say that the lukewarm, those in-between, those uncommitted either way, He would spew out of His mouth? He prefers you cold instead. Do you not take to heart His words?:

Revelation 3:15-20 MSG

(15) I know you inside and out, and find little to My liking. You're not cold, you're not hot--far better to be either cold or hot!

(16) You're stale. You're stagnant. You make Me want to vomit.

(17) You brag, ‘I'm rich, I've got it made, I need nothing from anyone,’ oblivious that in fact you're a pitiful, blind beggar, threadbare and homeless.

(18) Here's what I want you to do: Buy your gold from Me, gold that's been through the refiner's fire. Then you'll be rich. Buy your clothes from Me, clothes designed in Heaven. You've gone around half-naked long enough. And buy medicine for your eyes from Me so you can see, really see.

(19) The people I love, I call to account--prod and correct and guide so that they'll live at their best. Up on your feet, then! About face! Run after God!

(20) Look at Me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear Me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you.

Sympathetic words and ears can be comforting, but they aren't enough.

The non-committed think they can have the best of both worlds, but it doesn't work that way. Be His enemy and tell Him so, rather than play the friend and be a broken tooth when it comes time to eating.

Though they can be good in themselves, your smiles, handshakes, and friendly gestures are not only insufficient, they are treacherous. Sympathetic words and ears can be comforting, but they aren't enough.

As a child, I had a cousin who, while with me privately, was very friendly. We shared intimately, confiding in one another. We being well acquainted, I often had the impression he would always be a friend, no matter what.

Not so. Without fail, when times of conflict arose between me and anybody else, he always sided against me, no matter who it was or what the issue, whether I was right or wrong. He was classically two-faced. Amazingly, right after such an event, when the other party had gone their way, he would resume friendliness with me as though nothing had ever happened. It was bizarre.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:6).

And I don’t believe it was anything like schizophrenia. It was a decisive attitude. I realize now that there had to have been something between us, of which I was unaware, to cause him to have antipathy toward me consistently when others were involved. It could well have been something I had done to him for which he never forgave me. He never once expressed enmity toward me privately, or lodged a complaint.

He had no commitment to me as a friend.

Isn’t this a stark example of two-facedness and hypocrisy?

He may not have even known what caused him to be that way. I believe the Lord hardened his heart against me in preparation for what was down the road for me.

Though he was friendly with me privately, he had no commitment to me as a friend.

I will now give an example of someone who seemed to do better, where a friend wasn’t understood to have been hypocritical at all. He was sincere, passionate, and consistently faithful, for a time. He never privately or publicly expressed antipathy for his friend. He even willingly conflicted with his own father as he stood with his friend, whom the father sought to destroy.

The Bible describes Jonathan’s attitude and stance with David: “The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Samuel 18:1).

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt” (1 Samuel 18:3-4).

Then Jonathan’s father, King Saul of Israel, “spoke to Jonathan and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan delighted greatly in David. So

Jonathan told David, saying, My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and hide. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you. Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you” (1 Samuel 19:1-4).

Jonathan didn't go with David.

Saul continued to seek to kill David, and Jonathan vowed to David that he would inform him of good or evil purposed by his father Saul toward David. He made good his vow. He even tried to reason with his father and argue on David's behalf, and imperiled his own life doing so. At such a point it says, “And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food.... For he was grieved for David, because his father had put him to shame” (1 Samuel 20:34).

Now David had to flee for his life from Saul into the wilderness, and he and Jonathan met for the last time. “They kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. Then Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the Name of the Lord, saying, May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever. So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city” (1 Samuel 20:41).

Though they wept together, **David wept more**. And Jonathan didn't go with David. “Why would he?” you may ask. “Why should his friends have to suffer with David in the same way? Is it necessary?”

The answer is revealed further in the Scriptures, though hidden. Jonathan was later at his father's side in a war against the Philistines. Israel was defeated, and they were both killed.

Consider: The Bible testifies from cover to cover that no righteous person ever dies a violent premature death, except for martyrdom for God, for truth and righteousness. Jonathan died on the battlefield with his father against the Philistines. Remaining at his father's side instead of David's, Jonathan was destroyed in God's judgment upon Israel for Saul's sins.

Would Jonathan have perished with his father if he wasn't guilty? Is God unjust, that He would kill both guilty and innocent in the same way? Abraham, the father of faith, knew differently and expressed so when interceding with God for his nephew Lot, whose city faced imminent destruction:

“Far be it from You to act in this manner, to kill the righteous with the wicked. And far be it from You, that the righteous should be as the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25 MKJV)

Those who had identified with David in his sojourn were glorified with him.

Is God not a just and merciful God? Yes, He is, and with Him there is no contradiction, no two-facedness, and no inconsistency whatsoever.

So Saul and Jonathan were slaughtered. But what happened to David, whom Saul and his army hunted for David’s life? He received the throne of Israel, succeeding Saul, who perished with his sons by the sword. Of David and Jonathan, one was taken, and one was left. Of Saul and David, one was taken, and one was left. (See Matthew 24:37-42.)

Those who had identified with David in his wilderness sojourn were glorified with him. And what a motley crew they were!

“And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him” (1 Samuel 22:2).

Princes who wouldn’t take a decisive, committed stand and identification with David perished; misfits who did so came to reign with him. Powerful kings perished, while hunted outcasts were spared.

There’s active commitment and passive commitment, natural and determined. When angels came to Sodom to rescue Lot and his family from impending doom, there were two directions of commitment manifest. Some of Lot’s children were so naturally committed to the Sodomite environment and the unbelief there, that they (his sons-in-law) thought Lot was joking when he tried to warn them of impending doom.

Isn’t it understandable that they didn’t believe him? After all, what evidence did they have? “God told me”? Had the spiritual state of Sodom offended them, and had they had faith, their eyes being single, they might have seen things Lot’s way, that is, God’s way.

Lot and his daughters were committed to obeying.

Who would believe it if I were to speak to people in your city, saying, “God is about to destroy this city! Get out, now!”? Would your unbelief be understandable? Yes, if you were one with your city, in unbelief.

Listen, people, commitment is *always* there, in one direction or the other, for good or for evil, for or against (there is no middle ground, no “no man’s land”). Though Lot’s sons-in-law expressed no obvious personal opposition to him, still they were committed against him, and perished in their stance, like Jonathan.

When Lot, his wife, and his two daughters were brought out of the city, they were expressly told not to look back. Lot and his daughters were committed to obeying. Think about it: It wouldn’t have been easy. Wouldn’t the suspense and curiosity be difficult to deal with? The saying is very true - curiosity kills the cat. They had to have the faith and commitment to survive.

As for Lot’s wife, who remains nameless as do all those uncommitted, her heart lingered for her children who decided to remain behind. One might say that was understandable, as well. The fact is that her heart’s commitment was to Sodom. She wasn’t committed to paying the price; she didn’t believe, and therefore she wasn’t committed to obeying, so she perished.

How true is our faith?

Ananias and Sapphira were believers in the days of the apostles, shortly after the Lord’s days on earth in His flesh (Acts 5). The saints were selling their lands, houses, and possessions, and bringing the proceeds to the apostles for distribution among all the saints, so that none would go without. This was purely voluntary. Ananias and his wife sold a possession, kept part of it back for themselves, and gave the rest to the apostles, but told them they had given the entire proceeds to them.

Their hypocrisy and pretense of commitment were their sin.

Peter told them they lied not to men, but to God. Apparently, they didn’t know Who they were dealing with. They didn’t really believe God was working through the apostles, that all that was happening there was God’s doing. To them, it seemed more of a social movement, than a movement of God. They were in unbelief, not committed to God, to the apostles, to the saints, or to the truth.

They were committed to themselves first and foremost, to preserve and nourish themselves above others. It wouldn't have been bad had they honestly held back a portion. It wasn't against the law or against God to do so. Their hypocrisy and pretense of commitment were their sin. "We want in on this new thing, but we want to cover our bets, in case it doesn't go the way we would like it to," or, "We prefer that it goes better for us than for others." They took out "insurance" and "assurance policies." For that self-preservation, God slew them. There is no self-preservation permitted in the Kingdom of God.

We tend to admire people who are popular, don't make waves, do us favors, and try to find common ground. Often their social and business contacts and relationships are enviable. They know everybody, and everybody knows them. They can often get elected or appointed to positions of importance or popularity in society, and could conceivably get almost anything they want from the world.

But, people, it isn't so with the Kingdom of God. Whoever will walk with God must forsake all the benefits of this world. The price must be paid. The popularity, respect, prestige, and all benefits bestowed by the world are anathema to God.

Why have the saints always been hated and persecuted throughout history? Why did Jesus say that those who followed Him would be hated by all men for His Name's sake? Why was He Himself so hated that they should kill Him? It was because He was committed - committed to speaking the truth, committed to testifying against the world, and committed to the Father, Whom the world hated and does hate.

Do churchgoers identify with God? In appearance and word only.

"All those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

All means all. If there is no persecution, it's because there is no godliness. If there is no godliness, it's because there is no commitment to God and to all those who identify with Him. It's that simple. If there is no commitment to truth and to God, yet the talk or the show is present, the end will be as that of Lot's wife, of Jonathan, and of Ananias and Sapphira.

What are the churches of nominal Christendom all about? They are all talk, as in this example the Lord gave:

Matthew 21:28-31 MKJV

(28) But what do you think? A man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work in my vineyard today.

(29) He answered and said, I will not. But afterwards he repented and went.

(30) And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir;

and did not go.

(31) Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you that the tax-collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.

In most, if not all, cases, formal churchgoers come nowhere near to Jonathan's degree of friendship with one identified with God. And yet, as you know, Jonathan fell so far short of what was required that he lost his life in violent death at the hand of his enemies.

Do churchgoers identify with God? In appearance and word only, in all pretense and hypocrisy. "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof..." (2 Timothy 3:5). When the lines are drawn, they are soon found to be vicious enemies of the cross of Christ, working the works of men, opposing all that is good by their wicked ways, which appear to men to be good.

If we aren't committed to the utmost, we won't make it.

Truly, if any in organized churches want to commit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, they will have to become the offscouring of society. They will have to leave all their securities and comforts behind - their friends, families, church associations and activities, everything. They will have to become fools, spectacles, fanatics, misfits. Tough? Yes. Impossible? Yes, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Read [The Case for Coming Out](#) and [Only the Death Sentence Will Avail](#).

In 2 Kings 13:14-19, Elisha, a prophet of God, was dying. King Joash of Israel came to him and wept over him, saying, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" lamenting his death. (It would seem King Joash was expecting the same kind of departure for Elisha as happened for Elijah, but not so. In his lack of commitment, he was flattering Elisha, but Elisha saw through him and put him to the test.)

Elisha told the king to take a bow and some arrows. When speaking of the king's battles with the Syrians, he told him to take the arrows and strike the ground. The king did so, not once, not twice, but three times! "Commitment or what!" you may say. It wasn't satisfactory to the man of God. He angrily said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."

People, if we aren't committed to the utmost, we won't make it. We won't rid ourselves of our enemies, be they faults, ungodly passions, and attitudes within, or

people, debts, troubles, or problems without. We won't win the crown, be it within or without.

True, the battle isn't to the strong, or the race to the swift, and God is the One Who determines all things; nevertheless, it is the violent, Jesus says, that take the Kingdom by storm (Matthew 11:12). It is the one who puts his hand to the plow and doesn't look back, who gets the work done (Luke 9:62). It is the one who lets the dead bury the dead, who is committed (Luke 9:60).

"You shall seek Me and find Me if you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

God isn't prepared to commit Himself to a double-minded man, a man not utterly committed.

"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8 KJV).

God is particularly grieved with those who make a show of piety and profess faith in Him, but betray that which is right, proper, true, and good the moment they are tried. With such is His greatest displeasure. Hypocrites will find themselves losing what they hoped to keep. They will learn the hard way that it doesn't pay to play games and watch out for "number one" (themselves).

*"We **must** through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."*

It is a false notion that one doesn't have to live unto the Lord totally committed. For example, many have been taught the diabolical doctrine of "once saved, always saved." That doctrine encourages people to believe it sufficient in God's sight to go about their lives in spiritual mediocrity and presume to have benefits in both worlds.

Some even go so far as to think they can live in sin, because (they believe) Jesus forgave them, having paid for all sin, past, present, and future. They reason, "We are all weak; God knows it and is very forgiving." They think they will be granted entrance into Heaven because they once "asked Jesus into their hearts." They reason, "Perhaps it won't be a seating at the head table; it won't be the position of highest rulership, but it'll still be Heaven." Read [The False and Misleading Gospel of "Accepting" Jesus Christ.](#)

One is seriously misinformed and deceived if he thinks that way. If Jesus spews the lukewarm out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16), how can one possibly think He will accept him in sin and hypocrisy? Do you really think He'll brush all aside and say, "Let's just let bygones be bygones"? Many think that by His sacrifice, He has already done so.

Didn't Paul and Barnabas say to believers that "we *must* through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22)?

What sort of tribulation? Many in the world suffer all kinds, yet don't enter, so obviously it must not be simple tribulation that brings us in, but tribulation that grows out of God's internal dealings with us, and out of enmity from the world for His sake. Such enmity comes out of commitment to God, to truth, to right doing in all things, and to total separation from this world.

The commitment I'm talking about here is not a commitment to church, reading the Bible, witnessing, or any religious activity, though true believers will believe the Bible and speak the truth to neighbor and friend. It is a commitment in spirit and in truth, in reality - a laying down of one's will and life to God (Romans 12:1-2).

Many read their Bibles avidly, "witness of Christ" at every opportunity (it is often a power trip), and get actively involved in their churches, yet are not only uncommitted to God, but are very anti-Christ, diametrically opposed to genuine faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. I tell you, substitutions or sacrifices, instead of obedience, are thoroughly unacceptable to God. Your substitutionary works won't profit, no matter how magnificent they may seem in this world; they will condemn you, instead.

If there is no total commitment to God, there is no acceptance with Him.

He says you are either for Him all the way, or against Him all the way:

"No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24 MKJV).

If there is no total commitment to God, there is no acceptance with Him. Remember Jonathan, remember Ananias and Sapphira, remember Lot's wife, and remember King Joash.

Think of the total commitment and sacrifice required of athletes and performers to win an earthly crown and how few succeed - one in thousands. Paul put it this way:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 MKJV

(24) Do you not know that those running in a race all run, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain.

(25) And everyone who strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Then those truly that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

(26) So then I run, not as if I were uncertain. And so I fight, not as one who beats the air.

(27) But I buffet my body, and lead it captive, lest proclaiming to others I myself might be rejected.

God's requirements are so much higher than any of those on earth. Why do you think that in spite of his "good behavior" and sincerity with David, along with his help to him, Jonathan didn't make it, but was destroyed?

It certainly isn't our righteousness that wins the day. That's why we need a Savior and why Christ died for us. But faith is accounted to us for righteousness, which will be manifest by works - obedience to God. As Jesus says, "He that has My commandments and **keeps them**, he it is that loves Me..." (John 14:21).

Now for a parable:

There was a man who lived comfortably as a citizen in a certain country. He heard that he could also prosper in a neighboring country. Investigating, the benefits appealed to him, so he obtained a second citizenship.

Soon after, war broke out between the two nations. It wasn't easy to tell which way the war would go, but this man only cared to be on the winning side. He didn't want to risk his life fighting for either of them.

It wasn't long before he was served a draft notice by each nation to serve in battle. He considered what to do and thought, "I'll tell each nation that I belong to the other. That way I can avoid fighting, and keep my choice of citizenship open. I'll get to live with the winner when it's over."

Some time after the war had ended, a wooden crate was delivered from one country to the other, with an accompanying letter - "We chanced on a dual citizen of our nations who, though he enjoyed our benefits, refused to enlist with us in our war against you, being also a citizen of your nation. Enclosed, therefore, you will find your half."

Victor Hafichuk

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