

The Loss of Commitment

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Isaiah 1:16-28

As I study history a single theme appears over and over in the lives of people. It does not matter who is involved, the places may change and the names may be different, but one thing is common to those who made outstanding contributions to history, that one thing they all had in common was **commitment**. They were committed to their goal, their quest or challenge. There have been many examples of commitment through the years. When the Spanish explorer Cortez landed at Vera Cruz in 1519 to begin his conquest of Mexico with a small force of seven hundred men, he faced a daunting task. Legend has it that he purposely set fire to his fleet of eleven ships. Presumably, his men on the shore watched their only means of retreat sink to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. There was now only one direction to move, they had to go inland and conquer whatever they found, there was no turning back. Can you image standing on that foreign shore, thousands of miles from home, watching your ship sink before your very eyes?

Though the centuries men and woman both famous and unknown, rich and poor, strong and weak have committed themselves to a life they believed worth living. Commitment has always been a way of life. Today we face a society that has shunned all external commitments and have replaced them with the internal appetites. The key words today are "I, me, and mine." Paul warns us about this generation in II Timothy 3:2-4, "**For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.**"

This passage of scripture would make a good epithet for this generation. In years to come historians will look back at this period and say, "**They were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.**"

Frank Sinatra typified the thinking of many with the song he made famous, and which became the signature of his life, "I Did It My Way." He made his own rules as he went along. Now that Frank is no longer with us, I wonder what he would say to us now, if he could.

Commitment used to be so clear, God, family, and country. If a person was not committed to those three he was not in touch with the rest of society. In the last forty years God has systematically been removed from our public schools, courts, and government. Those who

openly defend the faith are called "**Radicals**," the Ten Commandments are classified as potentially harmful, crosses have been removed from some cemeteries because they are offensive, students cannot carry their bible to school or even pray silently in a lunch room for fear of intimidating other students. The family has been attacked with such force that it is crumbling before our eyes. The homosexual agenda has become a driving force in Congress, along with other anti-family attitudes. There is a movement to destroy the family unit as we know it. States all across the country are attempting to make same sex marriages legal, and some have succeeded in doing so. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America could not prevent a homosexual from becoming a troop leader.

Our country has been in decline for the past forty years. No longer do we have the respect of the world community, no longer are we looked too for leadership, we are seen as spoiled, lazy, and morally corrupt by a large section of the world community. We are now told that we are not unique but simply part of the world community and we need to fit into it. The U.S. A. has been demoted and is now just part of the world family and we need to be in harmony. Why not have a coke and think about this one for a while.

This is a special land that was established to honor God and thus was blessed by Him. It is no wonder that commitment is a lost virtue; everything worth committing too has been or is being taken away.

The scriptures have a great deal to say about commitment. The nation of Israel was singled out by God to be a separate and distinct nation from the rest of the world. They were to be committed to God, their families and the land that God had given to them. Clearly God, family and country were worth committing their lives to and they did just that.

When we look at the ministry of Jesus, He was constantly calling for commitment. When Jesus called Simon and Andrew to come and follow him, they were looking at a major life changing commitment (Matthew 4:18-22). Everyone Jesus calls is faced with a life changing commitment. In John 12:26 Jesus speaks of commitment, "**If any man will serve me, let him follow me.**"

For each of us there are two choices to consider, God's way or our way. Yes, you do have a choice, but listen to what God says about the choices. In Matthew 11:28-29 there is an offer of help from God when we chose to follow Him, "**Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**"

The offer for help is explicit in the words, "come, take, and learn." These three calls for help and healing carry an implicit demand for personal acceptance and individual accountability.

The Greek word translated “come,” means “come here.” It is actually a call designed to generate a sense of urgency in the hearers mind to respond. Since the word is in the plural it implies that the call is open to whoever hears the call.

The Greek word translated “take,” means “to take up, lift, or rise.” There is conveyed in this word the idea of active participation on the part of the one called to actually take something.

The Greek word translated “learn,” means “to increase in knowledge, or be increased in knowledge, often to learn by asking questions or by observation.” Again there is an active participation on the part of the one learning.

Clearly in Jesus’ call to “come, take, and learn” we have the concept of commitment. One is called to actually come, take up, and begin to learn. A deliberate decision to take action is essential. Notice that the act of coming, taking up, and learning must, by the nature of it, involve an individual’s willing participation.

The rewards of commitment are clear, there is the promise of rest from the burden, an easy yoke, a lighter load and rest for the soul. All the rewards are possible when we make a personal commitment to follow Christ.

Why God Requires Commitment

In Psalm 37:5, David said, “**Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: he will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noon day sun.**” The Hebrew word translated “commit” means “to roll.” So to commit your life to the Lord is to roll it upon Him. In order to “roll upon” there must be a deliberate and decisive action which is prompted or motivated by a personal commitment to turn your life over to the Lord.

A righteous God must require **commitment** of those who would be the recipients of His healing promises. Otherwise, there must be universal healing for every wrong thing regardless of individual accountability. If such were the case, no system of absolutes could be possible; and without His system of absolutes, God could not be God.

God requires individual commitment because He has established that, for the duration of life on earth, man is free to choose the righteous ways of God or be free to reject them. As a result, individual commitment is an unchangeable condition for God’s healing.

How god requires Commitment

The first thing needed is **repentance** for past actions and attitudes which were opposed to God's righteousness, Luke 13:5, "***except you repent you shall likewise perish***; II Peter 3:9, "***God is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance.***"

The next step requires a **rethinking** of attitudes and actions according to the Word of God. The way we think determines how we act, if we are to change our actions we need to change our thinking, Micah 6:8, "***He hath showed you, O man, what is good and what doth the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?***" In Hebrews 12:14 we read, "***Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.***"

Probably the best passage to deal with this subject is Isaiah 1:16-20, "***Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.***"

Examples of Commitment

God came to Noah and told him to build an ark. Noah had no idea what an ark was or how to build it, but we read in Genesis 6:13 that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." This was no overnight commitment; it took Noah around a hundred years to complete this work, all the time being harassed by his neighbors.

When Jesus came to Simon Peter after he had fished all night and caught nothing, he said to Simon, go back out and let down your nets. Simon answered, "***Master we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets. When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break,***" (Luke 5:4-6). It took a willingness for Simon to obey, it took a sense of commitment to obedience to the Lord to do what Simon thought was a waste of time.

The records are full of people who faithfully committed their lives to the Lord, but there are many who refused to do so. We see Cain's rejection of God's call to repentance (Genesis 4), the nation of Israel's rejection of Moses' call to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 13); Jonah's initial rejection of God's call to go to Nineveh (Jonah 1); the rich young ruler's rejection of Jesus' call to self-denial (Matthew 19). The contrast is obvious between those who willingly commit to the Lord and those who turn away.

Webster defines commitment as “**being obligated to something.**” There lies the heart of the whole matter; we do not want to be obligated to anything or anybody. I recently spoke with a young lady and she shared her situation with me. She had lived with a man for several years, thinking he was everything she wanted in a man they married. After a few months they were separated and have since filed for divorce. She was really confused, she had no idea how all of this could happen. What changed, she asked? Marriage is a commitment, that’s what changed.

There is a price connected with any commitment, if we are only concerned with me, myself, and I, any price is too great to pay. With our refusal to commit to God we open ourselves to the consequences of our rebellion. Our morals disappear, our families dissolve and our country is destroyed from within. Having turned from the living God we lose the protective hand of God that has made this country great. Proverbs 14:34, “***Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.***”

A mission society once wrote to David Livingston: “Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to send other men to join you.” Livingston replied: “If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don’t want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.”

God is calling us to a life of commitment, to the Saviour who died for us, to the family that needs us and the country that God blessed us with. Each demands an obligation, surrender to the Lord, service to our family and a sacrifice to save this country.