

Commitment

Matthew 10:34-39

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INTRODUCTION - A journalist was assigned to the Jerusalem bureau of his newspaper. He got an apartment overlooking the Wailing Wall. After several weeks he realized that whenever he looked at the wall he saw an old Jewish man praying vigorously.

The journalist wondered whether there was a publishable story here. He went down to the wall, introduced himself and said: "I see that you come every day to the wall. What are you praying for?"

The old man replied: "What am I praying for? In the morning I pray for world peace, and then I pray for the brotherhood of man. I go home, have a glass of tea, and I come back to the wall to pray for the eradication of illness and disease from the earth."

The journalist was taken by the old man's sincerity and persistence. "You mean you have been coming to the wall to pray every day for these things?" The old man nodded.

"How long have you been coming to the wall to pray for these things?"

The old man became reflective and then replied: "How long? Maybe twenty, twenty-five years."

The amazed journalist finally asked: "How does it feel to come and pray every day for over 20 years for these things?"

"How does it feel?" the old man replied. "It feels like I'm talking to a wall."
[*Jerusalem Post*, October 1979, Brian Cohen]

I am sure that praying at that wall got old, but at least, HE WAS COMMITTED TO DOING IT!

In our text, **Matthew 10:34-39**, Jesus speaks of true commitment to Him. He is talking about loyalty, allegiance, dedication, etc.

V. 34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword."



On the surface, these words sound bad. We might think, “But I thought Jesus was the prince of peace? Why would He want to bring a sword or fighting?”

The point of the text is that if we are truly committed followers of Christ we will make some enemies in this world! Some people will not like us because of our faith, etc. Some people don't like good people! They don't like do-gooders or Christian people of any kind!

After all, did not the people of Jesus' day crucify Him? And no one was better or did better than Jesus. How then can we expect different treatment in this world?

John 15:18-19 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

ILLUSTRATION - From our perspective, no one could say anything bad about Billy Graham. I don't think anyone has ever accused him of wrongdoing....of any kind. But I suspect that down through the years Billy Graham has received some negative, nasty mail and perhaps even some hate mail. WHY? BECAUSE OF THE STAND HE HAS TAKEN FOR CHRIST ALL HIS LIFE.

Matt. 10:35-36 “For I have come to turn " a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.”

Jesus did not purposely want to cause trouble in any household. Be that father and son, daughter and mother, etc. But if a person makes a strong commitment to Christ it may well cause some trouble or division in the home.

We have heard stories of Orthodox Jews accepting Christ as their Savior and then their whole family would disown them. That does happen in some places and countries. If a person chooses to follow Christ, they may be completely ousted by their family and friends! I have seen this in Pakistan.

Matthew 10:37 “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Jesus didn't say we couldn't or shouldn't love our family members. He was just saying that we should love Him most of all! And when you consider everything He has done for us and will do for us, that is not asking too much of us.

True commitment to Christ means that we will love Him most of all and put Him first over all!

ILLUSTRATION - A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone (missionary to Africa – 1813-1873) and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "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." That's true commitment. [*Livingston Memoirs*, Henry Moffat, 1882, Pg. 37]

Let's consider some important areas where we need a greater commitment to Christ.
1- Worship 2- Work

I. COMMITMENT TO WORSHIP

Heb. 10:22 "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." "Let us draw near to God."

That's worship. Normally, we think in terms of "going to church" in order to worship God. **But true worship starts at home.**

ILLUSTRATION - It is said that a bird can go nine days without food.

- A man twelve days.
- A dog twenty days.
- A turtle five hundred days.
- A snake eight hundred days.
- A fish one thousand days.
- Insects twelve hundred days.

Wow! We certainly wouldn't want to be an insect. Aren't you glad that you are higher on the creation scale than an insect?

Even though we humans may be able to go 12 days without food, we won't! We often don't even want to go four hours without food.

What's your favorite food? Beef steak? Fish? Catfish? Salad? Chinese? Italian? Mexican? American? OR ALL OF THE ABOVE?

We all have our favorite foods and favorite eating places. I love most places here in Los Angeles, but recently, I told my wife, Elia, I wanted to go to Olive Garden for some of that good, hot bread they serve. We did and I ate two baskets. Well, we shared two baskets! Bread for the body but what about bread for the soul?

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

Our actions often say that nothing is more important than food and clothing, but Jesus said there was more to life!

In **Matthew 4** Jesus was hungry after fasting 40 days and nights. Satan tempted Jesus by saying, **“If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.”**

Matthew 4:4 **“Jesus answered (Satan), 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'”**

True spiritual nutrition comes from the Word of God. We get nourishment from scripture that we can't get anywhere else.

ILLUSTRATION - One concerned young man wrote: “ I'm 15, and I've been a Christian for years. I don't struggle with porn addiction or swearing or some of the other problems guys have. I try to be a good person, yet I feel as if I'm falling away from God. Even though I pray every day, I rarely read my Bible. I haven't even opened it in a long time. I really desire a strong relationship with Christ, but I feel too busy to do anything about it.” [*Faith Weaver*, September 1998, Pg.13]

What a bright 15 year-old! He recognized his need for Bible reading and that the lack of it was causing him a spiritual loss.

Busyness is a definite spiritual killer. And even though we may pray with some regularity we must also read. Communing with God is not a one-sided deal or should not be. We must not do ALL the talking as if we had all the answers to life. We need to be listening as well.

We need to be listening to what God has to say. **HE HAS ALL THE RIGHT ANSWERS TO LIFE**, which are contained in Scripture.

ILLUSTRATION - Douglas MacArthur had the right idea. He wrote: “Believe me, sir, never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed.” [*More Than a General*, 1963, Pg. 137] He must have known something that we don't.

We all need a greater commitment to Christ in our personal worship and this includes Bible reading and study. Not a day should go by that we don't read a portion of God's Word, at least a small portion.

The Word of God is powerful! It can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves! It can shape our lives and fill our hearts like nothing else can do! It is the living, eternal Word of God!

Of course, personal worship is also a matter of prayer and praise.

"A friend is one who knows us, but loves us anyway." - Jerome Cummings

Do you have a friend like this? Yes, you do, whether you realize it or not. The Lord Jesus is the BEST friend you have. He is always there for you. Always rooting for you even when you're down and out. He loves you no matter how bad you fall or fail. Consequently, it seems only reasonable that we should want to spend time talking to Him.

I can't encourage you enough to talk to the Lord continuously throughout the day...whispering prayers of all kinds....asking, seeking, blessing others, praising Him for His goodness and gifts. **THE MORE WE BLESS HIM, THE MORE HE'LL BLESS US!**

Heb. 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Commitment to worship should also include public worship with the church...the Lord's Day worship at His table.

ILLUSTRATION - The young man poured out his heart's devotion on paper as he wrote to the girl of his dreams: “Darling: I would climb the highest mountain, swim the widest stream, cross the burning desert, and die at the stake for you. P.S. I will see you on Saturday—if it doesn't rain.” [*Ann Landers*, Los Angeles Times, February 1997]

That sounds like some people when it comes to going to church. If it rains or if there is any kind of bad weather, let's just stay home. Or if there is something else we'd rather do, let's go do the other thing. “I love you, Lord, but not that much.”

ILLUSTRATION - Billy Graham said, "Jesus spoke about the ox in the ditch on the Sabbath. But if your ox gets in the ditch every Sunday, you should either get rid of the ox or fill up the ditch." [*Leadership*, March 2003, pg. 87]

ILLUSTRATION - The story is told about President James A. Garfield's first Sunday in Washington after his inauguration. A member of the cabinet insisted that a cabinet meeting be called at 10 a.m. the following day, which was Sunday, to handle a matter of grave importance.

President Garfield said that he had something to do at that time. The cabinet member insisted that the President break his previous engagement. GARFIELD REFUSED. The cabinet member said, "I would be interested to know with whom you could have an engagement so important that it cannot be broken."

Garfield replied, "I will be as frank as you are. MY ENGAGEMENT IS WITH THE LORD TO MEET HIM AT HIS HOUSE AND AT HIS TABLE AT 10:30 A.M. TOMORROW AND I WILL BE THERE." Garfield was there and the crisis passed and the nation survived. [*Washington Review*, September 1978, Pg.62]

And that's the kind of commitment that we all should have when it comes to public worship of the Lord!

II. COMMITMENT TO WORK

ILLUSTRATION - The boss said to Jones, "How long have you been working here?" Jones replied, "EVER SINCE I HEARD YOU COMING DOWN THE HALL." [*Fresh Illustrations-Word Search*, 2003] It's true that some people only work when the boss is around. Guess what? Our boss is ever-present.

Col. 3:22-24 "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Brothers and sisters, regardless of the type of work we do in life we are serving the Lord. We are His. We are His representatives and not just in church. Consequently, He expects us to do our best work at work.

I tend to believe in the old philosophy: If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well. I don't like slipshod work, poor service, or have-baked bread. As representatives of Christ in this world we must do our best and give our best.

ILLUSTRATION- Dr. Ironside, when a boy, helped his widowed mother by working during vacations, Saturdays, and out-of-school days for a Scottish shoe worker who was a Christian. He posted Bible verses all over the shop so that everywhere one looked, he would see the Word of God. No package went out to a customer without a tract or a word of testimony, and many came back for salvation.

Dr. Ironside's job was to pound leather for shoe soles. A piece of cowhide was cut to size, soaked in water, and pounded until it was hard and dry. After endless poundings, he was weary. One day, he noticed that another godless cobbler was not pounding, but was nailing the soles while still wet. He said, "So they come back quicker."

The Christian owner explained to Ironside: "I do not cobble just for 50¢ or 75¢ from customers. I do it for the glory of God. In heaven, I expect every shoe returned to me in a pile, and I do not want the Lord to say, 'Dan, that was a poor job. You did not do your best.' " WE NEED TO DO OUR BEST AT OUR WORK. [*Fresh Illustrations-Word Search*, 2003]

"I won't take my religion from any man who never works except with his mouth." - Carl Sandburg

"The reason why worry kills more people than work is that more people worry than work." - Robert Frost

“There is no substitute for hard work.” - Thomas Edison

ILLUSTRATION- It is said that each day across the USA 50,000 people quit their jobs. In a recent survey of workers across the USA, nearly 85% said that they could work harder at the job. More than half claimed they could double their effectiveness "if (they) wanted to." [*Fox News Service*, March 2006]

I believe that everybody ought to work and they ought to work harder than they do. And this also holds true when it comes to working for the Lord.

James 1:22 “But be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only.”

Rom. 12:11 “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”

I honestly don't think anyone works too much or too hard for the Lord, not even paid preachers.

ILLUSTRATION- C.T. Studd, the famous member of the English XI cricket team, gave away his vast wealth and became a missionary in India, China and Africa. His slogan was, "If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." Studd was committed to the work of Christ. [*Faith Library*, 1967, Pg.1516]

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION- An African preacher was overwhelmed by rebels who demanded that he renounce his faith. He refused. The night before they took his life, he wrote the following lines on a scrap of paper:

I am part of the "Fellowship of the Unashamed." I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals!

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, lead by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the

enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, or burn up till I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops.

And when He comes to get His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear. How about you? [*History of the African Apostles*, Christian History Series, 1949, Pg.739]