

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 23

2023

“Total Commitment”

We frequently hear some speaking of having "total commitment" in their lives. I think most of them expect us to believe that this "total commitment" is to Jesus Christ. There are several different groups who place much emphasis upon their members having this "total commitment." As you examine these groups you will find that they have different teachings and practices. About the only thing they have in common is their criticism and ridicule of those they say are "traditionalists." We sometimes find such attitudes among those who identify themselves as members of the body of Christ.

These individuals who place so much emphasis upon this "total commitment" make claims of sincerity, devotion and love for themselves while, at the same time, maintain that the "traditionalists" (which happens to be anyone who questions their activities) are insincere, not devoted and lacking in love.

One sure way of being classed as a "traditionalist" by these individuals is to stress the need to respect the authority of God's word in everything you teach and practice. I have never been able to understand why you could ignore the authority of Christ and simply teach and practice what you please and you are filled with sincerity, love and devotion. On the other hand, you stress that you should teach and practice only those things authorized by Him and this makes you insincere, not devoted and lacking in love. Can you figure it out?

Maybe what we need to do is go back and look at this matter of "TOTAL COMMITMENT." When you speak of someone having "commitment" this really doesn't tell you much unless you also reveal that to which they are committed. In my talks with those who claim this "total commitment" for themselves I have found that they truly are committed. Let's note some things to which they are committed.

Many of them are committed to doing that which pleases them. If it makes them "feel good" about themselves or brings pleasure to them they are committed to it. Oh, I know they talk about Jesus and would have you believe that He is the center of their lives, however, Jesus, himself, said, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46).

As we study through the pages of God's word we are made to realize that the teaching of Jesus or the apostles did not make those who heard it feel good about themselves. It made them realize that they were guilty of sin and were separated from God in their present condition. The dishonest and insincere became angry and often resorted to violence against the one telling them the truth (See Acts 7:54-60). Those who were honest were also made to feel bad upon learning of their condition but they received and obeyed the truth and then rejoiced (See Acts 2:41; 8:39).

By what standard do these individuals determine that if you emphasize strict obedience to and respect for the authority of Jesus you are insincere and not serving from the heart? How can they judge the hearts of others? It just maybe that those who teach and practice only that which is authorized in the word of God are doing so because they are "totally committed" to pleasing and glorifying the Lord rather than themselves. In fact, this is the kind of "total commitment" we need to have. Don't be deceived by those who say they are "totally committed" to Christ but show otherwise by their actions. The person who is committed to Christ will demonstrate that love by keeping His commandments (See John 14:15,21; 1 John 5:3).

To what are you committed?

✍ James Hahn

“What Am I Living For?”

The story has been told of an early Christian who was about to be put to death because he would not deny his Lord. His executioner was unable to understand his apparent lack of fear in the face of death. In fact, there was a manifestation of joy on the part of the Christian. Finally, the executioner could contain himself no longer. He exclaimed, "I am about to kill you! How can you remain so calm and happy?" To which the Christian replied, "Kill me, and you take from me that which I cannot keep, and you give me that which I cannot lose."

This Christian had learned a very important lesson that we all need to learn. He had not only learned how to live, he had learned how to face death. We hear so much talk about how we should live and how we can give meaning to our life, however I am convinced that many have not even come close to learning the real secret to happy and meaningful living. Most people seem to have the idea that to be happy in this life we must have something "worth living for." With this thought in mind many turn to money, pleasure or other things of this world, hoping to find that which is worth "living for." All such attempts to find happiness end in failure.

The faithful Christian has learned that the things of this life are very empty when it comes to giving meaning and purpose to one's life. The only thing really important is so living now that we may gain eternal life when this life is over. The Christian is willing to die rather than deny his Lord. This is the thing that is of real value. Someone has truly said, "If we have nothing worth dying for then we really have very little worth living for." Jesus said, "What shall a man profit, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

✍ James Hahn

Limping Between the Two

When Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel he also presented a challenge to the children of Israel. He said, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). God has always expected His people to declare themselves. This same challenge needs to be presented to those who would identify themselves as the people of God today. If we are going to serve Jehovah then let's do so. There is no room in the kingdom of God for half-hearted, lukewarm service (See Revelation 3:14-19). To those members of the body of Christ who are not faithful in their service to the Lord, we ask, "How long go ye limping between the two sides?"

✍ James Hahn

Belleville church of Christ

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www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

Brad Phillips (765) 720-2816