

Commitment to Christ

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a deep, ongoing commitment to Christ through surrender, daily prayer, and reliance on His guidance.

Duration: 42:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:6, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 1:21

Topics: "Commitment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of endurance in the Christian life. He shares a story about the coronation ceremony of the Queen of England, highlighting the Archbishop of Canterbury's proclamation of the Queen's authority. The preacher also recounts a personal experience of a woman who prioritized Jesus Christ above all else in her life. He emphasizes the need for Christians to surrender their lives to Jesus and allow Him to have control. The preacher concludes by challenging the audience to fully commit their lives to the Lord and trust Him in all aspects.

Transcript

How many of you know the chorus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me? Anybody? A few. It came straight from Ireland. Maybe if you have a pencil and pen, you'd like to write down the words and you can use a lot of ditto marks because it's a lot of repetition.

The first verse is thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me and then you repeat that, different notes. We introduced this at our assembly in San Lorenzo a year ago and I think there's hardly a worship meeting that goes by that somebody doesn't start it spontaneously. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me, repeat.

The second verse is you went to Calvary, there you died for me, thank you Lord for loving me and you repeat that. You went to Calvary, there you died for me, thank you Lord for loving me and then the third verse is you rose up from the grave to me new life you gave, thank you Lord for loving me. Sing the three verses, three verses and then you repeat the first verse again.

Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me. Let me stop there.

The only part of it, if you have any trouble with this, this one, thank you Jesus, three beats for the word Jesus, right? Thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me. You went to Calvary, sing it, there you died for me, thank you Lord for loving me. You went to Calvary, there you died for me, thank you Lord for loving me.

You rose up from the grave to me new life you gave, thank you Lord for loving me. You rose up from the grave to me new life you gave, thank you Lord for loving me. Repeat the first verse, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. That was the dress rehearsal, here's the concert. Really, sing it out and carry it away with you and I think it'll bless you during the week.

Rennie. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me.

You went to Calvary, there you died for me, thank you Lord for loving me. You went to Calvary, there you died for me, thank you Lord for loving me. You rose up from the grave to me new life you gave, thank you Lord for loving me.

You rose up from the grave. Thank you Jesus, thank you Lord. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me.

Praise God, that tells the whole story, doesn't it? 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Beginning at verse 11. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men that we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them with glory in appearance and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us.

I'm especially interested in verses 14 and 15. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh. Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature.

All things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

To it, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

For he, God, hath made him, Christ, to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Back to verse fourteen. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.

But that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. I'd like to speak to you this afternoon on the subject commitment to Christ. And I'd like to start by reading to you an excerpt that I got from a man named James Stewart.

James Stewart is a preacher in Scotland, I believe. I think he's chaplain to the Queen in Scotland. I've read his books and have been blessed by them.

And he said this, Once any man has looked into Christ's eyes and felt the magnetism of his way of life, he's never going to be content with the secular ideals and standards that may have seemed adequate before Christ came. Christ has spoiled him for anything else. The old standards of values have become cinders, ashes, dust.

Thank God for that. That's so important, I'm going to read it to you again. I hope it comes across clearly to you what he's saying.

He says, Once any man has looked into Christ's eyes and felt the magnetism of his way of life, he's never going to be content with the secular ideals and standards that may have seemed adequate before Christ came. Christ has spoiled him for anything else. The old standards of values have become cinders, ashes, dust.

Thank God for that. That means before we come into relationship with Christ, we have our own ambitions, we have our own desires, we have our own way of planning our lives. Once we look into his eyes and feel his magnetism, they all seem very worthless.

And that's what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 5. He's looking at the cross of Christ and he sees the Lord Jesus Christ dying for him there on the cross, and he's saying, I can never be the same again. The love of Christ constrains me or as David Livingstone said, the love of Christ compels me. It compels you how, David Livingstone? Well, it brings me to this conclusion that if he died for me, then I can no longer live for myself.

I have to live for him who died for me. We talk about commitment. We talk about surrender.

We talk about seeking first the kingdom of God. We talk about the victorious Christian life. We talk about being filled with the spirit.

We talk about consecration. I would like to see if I can uncomplicate it this afternoon. Sometimes it seems very ethereal to us.

Sometimes it seems very mystical and far off. It should be very practical in our lives. Actually, that whole matter of commitment to Christ is just as much a work of the Spirit of God as conversion is.

When the Spirit of God comes into our lives and we begin to see things through Christ's eyes, we're not men and women on earth looking up into heaven. We're men and women in the heavenlies looking down on earth, and it makes a difference. It makes a difference.

How does it happen to a person? Well, first of all, I really believe that a person sees a vision and he can no longer live for himself. I think this is God's will for all of us. The poet said, I have seen a vision and for self I cannot live.

Life is worse than worthless unless all I give. That really is true. It really is true.

He sees a vision and can no longer live for himself. And as James Stewart said so well, his secular ideals and standards become cinders, ashes. Dust.

I think that's beautiful. In connection with that, a man comes to the place, when I say a man, I mean a woman too, when a person comes to the place where he realizes that he doesn't know what's best for him in life. I can honestly say that for quite a few years after I was saved, I had my own plans for my life.

I know what I wanted to do. And frankly, I didn't want the Lord to interfere with those plans. And I think that we talk to most Christian people and they have their own ideas as to what they want to do.

It's not necessarily what the Lord wants them to do. I think it's a wonderful thing when we come to the place that Jeremiah spoke of. He said, Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in him.

It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. This is a great revelation when it comes flooding in upon us that we really don't know what's best in our lives. God knows what's best and God has options that we don't know anything about.

God has wonderful pathways in his blueprint that would never dawn on us in our wildest imagination. But we don't dare commit our lives to him because we're afraid of a blessing. I've often spoken of my friend George Verwer.

George Verwer was staying with us at Emmaus one time. He had a room up in the dormitory while he was visiting. And one time he was going through the dormitory and one of the doors was open and two fellows were in there praying.

And one of the fellows was agonizing before the Lord. He said, Lord, I can't do it. You know, I can't do it.

And George was just passing by and he stuck his head in the door and he said, What's the matter? Are you afraid of the blessing? I guess the fellow thought it was a voice from heaven. But it was in a way too, wasn't it? And I often think of that, you know, when we resist the will of God, when we resist the plan of God in our lives, we're just afraid of a blessing. That's all.

Because his way is best. So it's a wonderful thing to come to that place in life where I can say, Lord, I don't know what's best for my life. I always thought I did.

But I don't know what's best. So I'm willing to turn my life over to you and just let you choose for me, no matter what it might be. Hard, isn't it? Hard.

I think I trusted the Lord when I was about 18 years of age. I turned my life over to him for salvation. But I was brought up by an immigrant family and they had very strong ambitions for us that were kind of drilled into us.

And I don't think it was at least seven years later that I dared to get down on my knees and say, Lord, my life is yours. You bought it, the cross. Do anything you want with it.

It meant a complete change in my life. But I'd like to testify to the glory of God tonight. Today, I've had a wonderful life.

If he could have let me just choose every step of the way, I couldn't have chosen it as well as he's chosen it for me. And that's the testimony of any person who has said, let the Lord choose for him. So that's the

next thing, is that we come to realize that.

We come to realize that all our old ambitions are cinders, ashes, and dust. We realize we don't know what's best in life. And then we turn our lives over to the Lord without any strings attached.

It's kind of a, I call it a crisis act of commitment. And there has to be a first time in life when this happens. With some of you, I don't doubt that it happened at the time of your conversion.

I think it did with the Apostle Paul, didn't it? Lord, who art thou? Who art thou, Lord? What wilt thou have me to do? Who art thou, Lord? He got the person of Christ straight. What wilt thou have me to do? He turned his life over to him in dedication and consecration and commitment. And what a wonderful life it was, huh? We're talking about him in 1985.

And what happens when you do that? Well, you realize that it's the only reasonable thing that a person can do. There's nothing more sane, sensible, reasonable than that the creature should turn his life over to the Lord to control it. But it's tough.

It's hard. Our aide, Laidlaw, said that there's a lack of sincerity in committing the eternal soul to the Lord for salvation and not daring to commit our lives to him for service. We dare to trust him to save us from eternal hell and to take us to heaven, but we hesitate to let him control our lives here and now.

Isn't that true? We do. We dare to trust him to save us from hell and to take us home to heaven, but we don't dare to trust him to control our lives here and now. And Lady Powerscourt said it seems an insult to that love which gave all for us to say that we love and yet stop to calculate about giving all to him.

In other words, it was quite reasonable for him to give all for us, but we stop and calculate about our giving all to him when our all is only two mites anyway. His all is heaven, earth, eternity, himself, she said. Better not to love at all.

Better to be cold than to be lukewarm. The sacrifices of God demand, the sacrifice of Christ demands that we turn our lives over to him. O Christ, thy bleeding hands and feet, thy sacrifice for me.

Each wound, each tear demands my life, a sacrifice for thee. I don't believe any man or woman has ever made history for God without coming to that crisis in his life when for the first time he got down on his knees and turned his life over to the Lord for whatever the Lord might have in store for him. I like to read the act of consecration of Betty Scott Stamm.

She was at the time a student in Moody Bible Institute. It was before she married John Stamm, actually, and she said, Lord, I give up my own purposes and plans, all my own desires, hopes, ambitions, and accept thy will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all, utterly to thee, to thee thine forever.

I hand over to thy keeping all of my friendships, my love, all the people whom I love are to take second fight in my heart. Fill me and seal me with thy Holy Spirit. Work out thy will in my life at any cost, now and forever.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. And some of you have read the book, The Triumph of John and Betty Stamm. Goes back partly to that night when she got down on her knees and prayed that prayer and wrote it in the front of her Bible.

Have you ever done that? I think of others who've done the same thing. William Borden of Yale. Lord Jesus, I take hands off as far as my life is concerned.

I put thee on the throne of my heart. Change. Cleanse.

Use me as thou shalt choose. I take the full power of thy Holy Spirit. I thank thee.

Amen. William Borden of Yale. Made history of God.

Some of you have read the book, Borden of Yale. I believe it goes back to the moment when for the first time he spoke those words in the ear of God. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Prince of Preachers.

He said, In that day when I surrendered myself to my Savior, I gave him my body, my soul, my spirit. I gave him all I had and all I shall have for time and eternity. I gave him all my talents, my powers, my faculties, my eyes, my ears, my limbs, my emotions, my judgment, my whole manhood and all that could come of it.

And A.T. Pearson said of him later, of all the mind he had and all the chance God gave him, he made the best of the most. I like the story of when Spurgeon was going with a young lady in England. He was in his, oh 19 or 20, preaching in London and filling the biggest auditoriums in London.

And one night he went around in the coach to pick up his girl and his girlfriend and to bring her to the meeting. And they drove to the meeting and when Spurgeon got to the meeting the crowd outside waiting to get into the auditorium. Spurgeon's mind was filled with the gospel message he was going to deliver.

And he got out of the coach and ran into the auditorium. And he got up on the platform and he started to, and he realized he had left her sitting in the coach. And he looked out over the audience and she wasn't anywhere to be seen.

So after the meeting was over and after he had dealt with the inquirers he made his way out to her house. Her mother and father answered the door. He said he would like to see her.

They said she doesn't want to see you. She was upstairs pouting. But he insisted.

And she came down and she said to him, look, I'm sorry for what has happened, but we must get something straight. If you and I are going to be married, you will have to take second place in my life. Jesus Christ must always have first place in my life.

And later after that great ministry had finished, Mrs. Spurgeon said that God taught her a very wonderful lesson that night. That there was someone who had first place in Charles's life and it was not she. It was Jesus.

And she was grateful for it. I'd like to say to you sisters who are here today, if you have a husband or if you have a boyfriend who puts Christ first in life, you have the right kind of a man. And I'd like to say to the brothers here today too, if you have a wife or if you have a girlfriend and Christ is in first place and you play the second fiddle, that's the right kind.

Spurgeon said it takes more grace than I can ever tell to play second fiddle well. But that's what we're called to do, isn't it? Play second fiddle well with Jesus in the first place. So I would suggest to you today that in this matter of commitment, we have to begin there.

And it's a struggle, a struggle to get down on our knees and cry our hearts out to the Lord. Lord Jesus, I want you to have first place in my life. I want to do your will.

I'm willing to put all of my ambitions and all the things I thought were best for my life and I'm just going to wait until you tell me what's best. Crisis of commitment. But that crisis has to become a process.

It isn't enough just to do it once. It has to be repeated daily. There has to be a daily recommitment of ourselves to the Lord.

I believe that every day of our lives we should be down on our knees there in the morning and say Lord Jesus, I commit myself to you for the next 24 hour period. Not the next week, month, year. The next 24 hour period.

It's great to live in day tight compartments, isn't it? Life by the inch is a cinch. Life by the yard is hard. And I think that the Lord wants us to do this.

To dedicate ourselves afresh to the Savior every morning and to ask Him to live His life through us. I like the poem that says, I want my life so cleared of self that my dear Lord may come and set up His own furnishings and make my heart His home. And since I know what this requires, each morning while it's still, I slip into that secret room and leave with Him my will.

He always takes it graciously, presenting me with His. I'm ready then to meet the day in any task there is. And this is how the Lord controls my interests, my ills.

Because we meet at break of day for an exchange of wills. Now I said I'd like to complicate it. We talk about being filled with the Spirit.

I think this is a great deal of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. To come before the Lord day by day for that exchange of wills. To meet in our daily quiet time and say, Lord Jesus, I give you my will for this day and I take your will for my life.

It's wonderful, isn't it? I tell you that's the life that counts for God. But of course that's not all. Because we still have to spend time in the Word of God and in prayer.

There's no use of thinking about a Spirit-filled life if we're not in the Word and if we're not spending time in prayer. Somebody suggested to me recently that all the temptations of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness were shortcuts. And he said, watch out for the shortcuts in life.

And I thought, that's right. Everybody would like to swallow a few holiness pills and get it quickly, you know? Everybody would like to have an altar experience where you come up at the end of the meeting and you believe the promise and you receive the filling. And that's common in evangelical circles today.

It makes it sound as if commitment to Christ and being filled with the Spirit was a once-for-all experience. But it isn't. It's a day-by-day experience.

And I deny that anybody can be filled with the Spirit through having an altar experience and going away and not opening the Bible during the week. Well, I think any one of us can do it. Are you with me so far? Tomorrow morning, you're going to get up, you're going to have your quiet time with the Lord, and you're going to exchange wills with Him.

You with me? Can you do that? I say, yeah, but what happens then? What happens then? You go forth through the day and you carry on your work whatever it might be. Just carry on your work, whatever it might be. You've committed yourself to Him and oftentimes it's going to be routine, mundane work.

I often think of the blessed Lord Jesus in those years in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. And He said, there's a world perishing around me, and here I am in a dinky carpenter's shop in Nazareth. He didn't say that.

His life was in the hands of God the Father. And He was happy there to be making yokes for the glory of God. Somebody said if there had been a sign over his shop in Nazareth it probably would have said, my yokes fit well.

It probably would have too. But you know, any honorable work can be done for the glory of God. I think it's a problem especially among young people.

I suppose it was with me too. They're always looking for greener pastures. You always think that there's some work that's all gloria in excelsis, cloud number nine, you know, moonlight and roses.

I don't know any work that doesn't have its drawbacks, do you? And I'd like to say even in Christian service, much of my work in Christian service has been day by day plodding, writing alone, disciplining myself to make the hours count for Christ, moments of loneliness perhaps along the way. It hasn't all been cloud number nine, but it can all be done for the glory of God. I haven't said anything yet that you couldn't do.

You go and you exchange your will with the Lord at the beginning of the day. You go forth and you do whatever work is laid before you to do. You kill yourself with work and then you pray yourself alive again.

And I think that's true. I think that's a healthy Christian life where you kill yourself with work and pray yourself alive again. But then I think this is an important thing.

Whatever happens during the day you accept it as the will of God for you. This is what gives poise and peace during the day. Look, you committed your life to the Lord at the beginning of the day, didn't you? Without reservations you said, Lord, I want your will for today.

And then something quite unexpected and maybe seemingly unfavorable happens during the day. I'm not speaking about sin. I might be speaking about an accident or something like that.

You accept that as part of the will of God. You committed your life to the Lord. He allowed this to happen.

It's part of His will for the day. That gives tremendous peace in a world of tumult. I think that's what the peace of Christ is.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. To be able to go through life and see His hand in what happens. Ill that God blesses is our good.

An unblessed good is ill. And all is right that seems most wrong if it be His good will. And you can afford to have that attitude if you've turned your life over to the Lord at the beginning of the day.

Occasionally there will be mountain peak experiences. I think it's lovely the way the Lord works. You go along and as I say it might be routine, it might be mundane.

You thought it was going to be all moonlight and roses and it turns out to be dirty dishes and dirty diapers. You know, that sort of thing. But the Lord knows.

He knows our hearts and He knows when we tend to become fed up with it and He just drops a little handful of encouragement along the way. I can testify that's been my experience in life in the service of the Lord. I have seldom seen immediate results from my ministry.

I know some people do. Praise God. Billy Graham does.

I know some people do, but I've seldom seen immediate results from my ministry. But in the most unexpected ways and in the most unexpected times, the Lord knows how to send a letter along just when I need it. I remember a woman came to me in San Jose and she said, Bill, do you remember years ago when we were meeting in that shack, a structure that looked more like a shack than a chapel? And she said, you spoke one night.

She said, that's the night I got assurance of salvation. Well, I didn't know anything about it. Years later.

And so we have to be willing to do that, to go along faithfully for the Lord day by day. The Lord will drop these encouragements and along the way, the Lord will drop these little indications that you're in His will. How? Well, the gears will mesh.

The gears will mesh in life. You know what it is when they don't mesh. You know when everything goes wrong.

Well, it's wonderful to see the gears mesh. It's wonderful to see your life sparkling with the supernatural. It's nice to know that you're radioactive with the Holy Spirit of God.

And it's a wonderful thing to know that God is working in and through you. And the wonderful thing, He does it without promoting conceit or pride in you. Because you remember a man can do nothing except to be given to Him from above.

And all you are is a vessel anyway. All you are is just an instrument in His hand. And I want to tell you, if you commit your life to the Lord at the beginning of the day, go forth and do the work that's laid out for you to do.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Persevere, applaud. God's plan for your life will emerge.

Say how? I don't know how, but I know it'll emerge. And I know that when you come to the crossroads and you know which one you have to take, He'll tell you. He'll never let you down.

If you are really committed to the Lord and you want His will supremely, God will show you His will for your life. It's mysterious. It's a path that no fowl knoweth.

The vulture's eye has never seen it. But I tell you, it's clear to the eye of faith. When you need God's guidance, you will get it.

Some have spoken to me about guidance here at the conference, and I've told them what I often tell myself. I'm praying for God's will and no guidance comes. God's guidance is to stay where you are.

Isn't that hard? Darkness about going is light about staying. I get before the Lord and say, Lord, do you know how foolish I am? If you only give me one indication of your will, I might miss it. Confirm the guidance in the mouths of two or three witnesses.

He does it. He does it. The Lord accommodates Himself to my weakness.

And He gives me two or three indications of His will, and I don't miss it when it's that clear. And I want to tell you, God will never, never forsake you in the time that you need it. But you're going to need endurance.

They say there's no one with endurance like the man who sells insurance. Well, I tell you, the Christian needs it, too, in the Christian life. John Stott, describing the coronation of the Queen in England, takes us to Westminster Abbey, where the ceremony takes place.

And he says that one of the most moving moments in the ceremony of coronation is just before the crown is placed on the Queen's head. The Archbishop of Canterbury goes out into the abbey there, and he calls four times toward each direction of the compass. He faces north, east, south, and west.

And he calls out four times, Sirs, I present unto you the undoubted Queen of this realm. Are you willing to do her homage? And not until a great affirmative shout has thundered down the nave of Westminster Abbey is the crown placed upon the Queen's head. But you know the spiritual parallel, don't you? Sirs, I present to you the Lord Jesus Christ, your undoubted Lord and Savior.

Are you willing to do him homage? Are you willing to turn the control of your life over to him? This is something that everyone who professes to be a follower of the Lord Jesus must answer. Does he hear your affirmative answer this afternoon? One of the martyrs of Ecuador was a young fellow named Pete Fleming. Some of you may have known him or known some of his relatives.

He had a favorite hymn in the InterVarsity hymn book, and it's really been a favorite of mine ever since I've come across it. It says this, Lord, in the fullness of my might, I would for thee be strong, while runneth o'er each dear delight, to thee would soar my song. I would not give the world my heart, and then thy service prove.

I would not feel my strength depart, and then profess thy love. I would not with swift-winged zeal on the world's errands go, then labor up the heavenly hill with wearied feet and slow. O not for thee my weak desires, my poorer baser part.

O not for thee my fading fires, the ashes of my heart. O choose me in my golden time. That's youth.

O choose me in my golden time, in my dear joys have part. For thee the glory of my prime, the fullness of my heart. In closing, I'd like to suggest a little prayer that we might all pray as you bow your head.

I don't ask you to repeat it after me, but I believe this is what the Lord is waiting to hear from us today. Lord Jesus, I have already turned my life over to you for salvation. Now I turn it over to you for service.

I give up all my own plans and ambitions and accept your will for my life. This means anywhere, anything, anytime. I give you my soul, my life, my all.

You have bled and died for me. Henceforth I will live for thee. How can I do less than give you my best and live for you completely after all you've done for me? Lord Jesus, we would make this our prayer this

afternoon.

We pray that some might even now be doing business with you in great waters and that some might be for the first time seeing that all worldly ambitions are cinders, ashes, and dust coming to you and turning over to you that which belongs to you anyway, that which was purchased at the cross of Calvary and asking for your will supremely. We ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

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