

Horton Haven Labor Day Retreat-11

Commitment to the Lord

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of total commitment to the Lord, using the examples of the burnt offering and the bond servant to illustrate the need to surrender our lives to God.

Duration: 51:54

Scripture: Leviticus 1:2, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Commitment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the commitment and loyalty of three men who risked their lives to fetch water from a well in Bethlehem for their leader. The speaker emphasizes the importance of pleasing one's master and being willing to sacrifice for their cause. The sermon then shifts to the story of three young men who refused to bow down to a false idol and were thrown into a fiery furnace. Miraculously, they were protected by God and emerged unharmed. The speaker draws a parallel between these stories and the deliverance that Jesus offers from the dominion of Satan, urging listeners to respond with complete devotion and surrender to Him.

Transcript

I'd just like to make a brief announcement. Get the Berean Call in the mail every month. Look at those hands.

I just want to, thank you very much, that's great. I just want to recommend that those who don't get it might consider writing in for it. I know you can't see the address here on the board, but you can come back afterwards and get it.

It's the Berean Call, Post Office Box 7019, Bend, Oregon, 97708. If you really want to know what's going on in the evangelical world today and how to answer some of the goofy, weird things that are going on, it's a good paper. It's sent to you free.

It's just a folder, really, of four or six pages, maybe, every month. And I thank God for Dave Hunt. He's one of the, he's a modern-day prophet.

Sometimes when I mention his name they say, he's divisive. I say, well, Isaiah was divisive. Jeremiah was divisive.

Jesus was divisive. There was a division of the people because of him. There's that in the scriptures.

Anybody who's going to be true to the word of God will be accused of being divisive. But Dave really stands for the truth of the word of God. If you can send a little to help with postage, it's not required.

But, of course, it's always appreciated. You know the saying, there's nothing like a little greenery to brighten up the scenery. And that would be very appropriate.

I'm really glad that Brother Harold gave out that hymn 37, Amazing Love, because it encapsulates what we talked about in the first part of this conference. That expression, amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, decide for me? We spent considerable time emphasizing the fact that the one who died on Calvin's cross is the one who designed the joints of your knees. The one who gives you the breath that you're breathing right now.

Who sustains your life. The one who died for you on that cross of wood is the incarnate God. And I want to tell you that truth will really grip us.

We'll never be the same again. We'll never be the same again. We talked about who he is.

We talked about what he did for us. We talked about the people for whom he did it. And we were rather shocked at the x-ray of ourselves, I think.

And then we talked about the marvelous blessings that have flowed to us as a result of that. And we realized, I think, when we came to an end of all of that, that this requires a response from us. And, of course, a response that requires it.

If the Lord Jesus did that for me, I belong to him. I'm his to do whatever he wants to do with me. And he quoted that verse, I have seen the vision, and for self I cannot live.

Life is worse than worthless unless all I live. And I'd like to emphasize again to you that really in the light of Calvary, what the Savior did for us is nothing short of blasphemy to hold back anything from him. The response required is total commitment.

And then we said that this is a thread that goes all through the Bible. And this morning I hope that our hearts were subdued when we thought of one of the greatest illustrations of commitment in the word of God, where that dear man Abraham went up to the rich Mariah to offer his son as a sacrifice to God, as a burnt offspring to God. It's just incredible, isn't it? It's just incredible when you stop to think of it.

He really loved God, didn't he? He really was devoted to God. He was really concentrated to God. And he would be willing to take the darling part, the thing he prized more than anything else in all the world, his unique, well-beloved son, to offer him up as a burnt offspring to God.

So we want to continue tonight and explore that subject. Follow that thread through the Old Testament, let's say, of commitment to the Lord. And it's going to bring us first of all to Leviticus chapter 1. This was alluded to in the breaking of bread.

I was rather interested this morning, the burnt offering. And it links very nicely with what we had this morning, Abraham and Isaac going up to Mount Moriah. Let's just read a few verses in the first chapter, Leviticus chapter 1, verse 2. Speak to the children of Israel, say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock, of the herd and of the flock.

If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish. He shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

He shall kill the bull before the Lord. The priest, heir and son, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. He shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.

The sons of Aaron, the priest, shall put fire on the altar and lay the wood in order on the altar. Then the priest, heir and son, shall lay the parts, the head and the fat, in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar. But he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water.

The priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by far, a sweet aroma to the Lord. Now, I know that in our assemblies, and I'm grateful for this, when we think of the burnt offering, we immediately think of the Lord Jesus Christ. This points forward to the Lord Jesus and what he did there on Calvary's cross, where he was totally consumed by the fires of God's judgment in consecration to God the Father.

But I'd like to think with you tonight, not so much a lot, what did it mean to a Jew in those days? What did it mean to a Hebrew when he made this offering to the Lord? Well, let's use a little sanctified imagination here. Here we see a Hebrew, and he's coming around the enclosure of the tabernacle, and he comes to the entrance. He has a young bullock, a rope around the bullock's neck, and probably the bullock is a bit reluctant.

Don't blame him if he is, and he's rather dragging this bullock, and they come through the entrance, and of course the first thing they come to is the altar there, the brazen altar. The fire is going, of course, in the altar. Maybe they can just feel the heat as they pass by it.

And what's going through that Hebrew's mind when he's doing this? Well, I'll tell you what he's doing, what he's thinking about. He's thinking about how good the Lord has been to him. He's been rehearsing the benefits of the Lord to him.

Once again, I remind you, he didn't have a New Testament. He didn't live on this side of Calvary. But he was like the psalmist who said, Bless the Lord, O my soul, of all that is within me.

Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. That was the language of his heart when he was bringing that animal to sacrifice it to the Lord.

He was thinking of the steadfast love of Jehovah. He was thinking of the mercy of God and the grace of God in his heart, which was absolutely filled with gratitude as he thought about it. And he remembers that the animal that he's going to offer must be a clean animal.

That is, it must chew the cud and have a cloven hoof. The chewing of the cud, of course, speaks of the meditation and the word of God and the cloven hoof of a separated life. It's kind of a forbidden word today, isn't it? Separation.

Oh yeah, you don't talk about separation today. No, no. It's all ecumenical talk today.

The animal must be without blemish, and now he's going to offer it of his own free will to the Lord. So he passes through the entrance, I say, of the curtained enclosure, and he comes immediately to the raising altar. And holding the rope in his left hand, he places his hand on the head of the animal.

What is he saying? Well, first of all, he's identifying himself with the animal. And he says, what's going to happen to this animal physically, materially, is what I want to be proved in my life. This animal is going to be all for me.

I want to be all for him. If he had been living today, he might say, thou hast bled and died for me. Henceforth, I will live for thee.

That's the brunt. That's the brunt offering. At this point, he probably ties the legs of the animal, rolls it over on its side and ties its legs, front and aft.

And then he takes a well-sharpened knife and with one deft stroke, he runs the knife across the throat of the animal. And a priest is there, and the priest catches the blood from the animal's neck and sprinkles it on the altar. A few deft spasms, and then the animal lies motionless.

And then the animal is skinned, and the skin is the only part that's not put on the altar. See, I like to give, I'm still the teacher at heart, and I like to give assignments. The assignment is, why isn't the skin of the animal included in the burnt offering? So now you have your assignment.

Having faced the problem, let us go on bravely. The offerer skins the animal, cuts it in pieces, and the priest lays the pieces upon the altar. And this is a unique feature of the burnt offering.

It is wholly consumed. You know, in some offerings, the priest got part of the meat, and the offerer got part of the meat, but not in this one. This is all for God.

The dismembered parts of the animal are burnt upon the altar until the whole carcass is consumed, all but the skin. And as I say, this is a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus and his total consecration to the Lord, but that's not what the man is saying here. I think the New Testament equivalent of this would be Romans 12, 1 and 2. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

This was a dead sacrifice. That you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will that's got set the burnt offering.

A living sacrifice to God. The poet wrote, His hands and feet and heart, all three, were pierced for me at Calvary. And here and now to him I bring my hands, feet, heart.

An offering. I like the fact that one of the important features of this was that it was a sweet savor offering. Isn't it neat? I think this is surprising.

First of all, let me say, there are a lot of things that happen on earth that are known in heaven. What do the people in heaven know that happens down here on earth? Well, I'll tell you one thing they know. They know when somebody's saved, don't they? There's rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents, more than over 99 just persons who need no repentance.

They know it when somebody's saved up here. It would be wonderful if somebody would touch Christ at this conference. Just come in repentance and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It would set the bells ringing in heaven. What else do they know in heaven? I believe they know when a backslider returns to the Lord in heaven. I think they know that.

You say, why do you say that? Well, because of the parable of the prodigal son. You know, when that prodigal son came back, the household became a place of festivity and rejoicing and celebration. The father said, bring out the padded top.

And they began to make merry. Well, I want to tell you, if a human father calls upon the household to start the joy bells ringing, I think it happens in heaven too, doesn't it? When a backslider comes back to the Lord. I think the prayers of the saints are known in heaven because of Revelation 8, again, which was read in the meeting this morning.

And you have the Lord Jesus there. And the prayers of the saints are going up to heaven. And he takes the prayers of the saints and he adds the fragrance of his own person and work and presents them to God the Father.

It's all public. It's not done in secret there in heaven. The prayers of the saints.

But you know, I believe there's something else that happens. I believe when a Christian, a man or a woman, a young man or a young woman, gets down on his knees and says, Lord Jesus, I want to be that burnt offering to you. I believe that the fragrance of that offering fills the throne of God.

It's a sweet savor offering. And if an animal, if the savor of an animal did it, I want to tell you, the savor of a human being doing that, presenting that burnt offering to the Lord would do it as well. When the Lord Jesus finds believers who are willing to give their bodies a living sacrifice for him, he takes great pleasure in them.

The throne room of the universe is filled with the fragrance of a sweet aroma. I forgot one thing. When a deed of kindness is done in the name of the Lord Jesus it's done in heaven.

You know, in Philippians chapter 4, the Philippians have sent a gift of money to the apostle Paul. And he said, I received that which you sent by Epaphroditus. He said, it was the odor of a sweet smell, he said.

A sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing divine. And J. Jowett said, he said, those Philippians just thought that they did something of a very local neighborhood, you know, giving that gift to Paul. And he said, the fragrance of it fills the universe.

Nice to know that, isn't it? That when you do something for the Lord, the fragrance of that gift done in the name of the Lord Jesus fills the throne room of heaven. What a wonderful God we have. The lesson of the burnt offering is this.

Give God all that is of you. I say that to young people that are here tonight. Give God all that is of you.

Let people call you a fanatic. I say, be a fanatic to Jesus. Give him every part of you.

All for Jesus, all for Jesus, all my being's ransom power, all my thoughts and words and doings, all my days and all my hours. Let my hands perform his bidding. Let my feet run in his ways.

Let my eyes see Jesus only. Let my lips speak for his praise. That's the burnt offering.

But you know, there's another ritual in the Old Testament that we should think about briefly, and this subject of commitment. I don't think any treatment of the subject of commitment in the Old Testament would be complete without this. I call it earmarked for life.

Earmarked. Does it surprise you to know that there was slavery in the Old Testament? It was. Sometimes a Jew would fall into such deep debt he would become bankrupt and the only thing he could do was sell himself into slavery in order to get rid of that debt.

Now, you say, does the Bible condone slavery? No, the Bible doesn't condone it. It records slavery as a historical fact. But the Lord, in his great mercy, passed legislation for the people how they were to treat the slaves.

They were not to be oppressive with the slaves. There's a Bill of Rights here for slaves and he saved them from cruel and abusive treatment. But one particular law that God passed was this, that after a slave had been in that condition for seven years he could go out and he could go out.

That was something. No matter how hard his labor was it was wonderful to think six more years, five more years, one more year and then I'm a free man. But the Lord realized too that some of those slaves would realize they had a good master.

They had a good master. And they realized that they were better off with that master than they would be out on their own. And so there was that lovely little ritual there in the Old Testament where at the seventh year they could go over and place the lobe of their ear on the door and with an awl their ear would be pierced.

And they would say I love my master. I will not go away free. And you know, that should be for every one of us too.

We should all have that pierced ear, shouldn't we? And say, I love my master. I will not go away free. Some see, of course, a reference to the Lord Jesus in this whose ear had been pierced in permanent servitude to God.

The application, of course, is very clear. We were the slaves of Satan and he was leading us about at his will. We were deceived and we were burdened and we were oppressed.

The devil, I tell you, is the worst of masters. But to steal and to kill and to destroy Jesus came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly. We met Jesus and he delivered us from that terrible dominion of the evil one.

Dear friends, the Lord Jesus had been good to us beyond imagination. Beyond imagination or calculation. And you know, the interesting thing is we can go on living.

After all he did for us, we can go on living for ourselves. We can go on living for our own pleasure. We can go on doing our own thing if we want.

We can live for material things. We can live as if making money was the only important thing in life. We can go to the door, as it were, and say, just earmark me for life.

I think that's where the word earmark came from, don't you? Just earmark me for life. Blessed Lord Jesus, I want to be yours forever and forever. Bishop Handley Mole, I think, captured the thought of the piercing of the ear in these words.

My master, lead me to thy door. Pierce this now willing ear once more. Thy bonds are freedom.

Let me stay with thee to toil, endure, obey. Yes, ear and hand and thought and will use all in thy dear slavery still. I like that.

Use all in thy dear slavery still. Self's weary liberties I cast beneath thy feet. There, keep them fast.

Spread them still down, and then I know these hands shall with thy gifts overflow. And pierced ears shall hear the one which tells them, thou and I. I want to tell you, his service is perfect. He never was a master like the Lord Jesus.

People are afraid to turn their lives over to the Lord Jesus. That's a kick. There are people here tonight, and I believe it, who can turn over their souls to the Lord for eternal salvation.

And they don't dare turn over their lives to Christ to let him manage them down here. It's true. How do you know it's true? Because it was true in my life for many years.

You can trust the Lord Jesus. You have faith to trust the Lord Jesus for the eternal salvation of your soul. You don't have faith to let him control your life.

This is what I'm talking about this weekend. A woman came up to me at the end of a meeting recently. Recently she told me something.

I don't get what she was describing. I said, well, this is what I'm driving at. That's what I tell you.

Tonight, this is what I'm driving at. If we can trust him for salvation, we can trust him to run our lives down here. Frances Ridley Havergal, some of you are familiar with her writing.

She said, I love, I love my master. I will not go out free. She determined that she would not do it either.

For he is my redeemer. He paid the price for me. I would not leave his service.

It is so sweet and blessed. And in the weariest moments, he gives the truest rest. For he has met my longing with words of golden tone, that I shall serve forever himself.

You know, there were, in the Old Testament, I think I might have mentioned there were hired servants and bond servants. A hired servant worked for money. Money was his motivation.

A bond servant belonged to his master. And when the Lord legislated that when a bond servant was released at the end of six years, the master had to give him wine and food and provision and everything he needed. I knew that.

Some masters were tempted to balk at that, you know. But let me tell you something. A bond servant was worth twice what a hired servant was.

Did you know that's true today? That's true today. A bond servant is worth twice what a hired servant is. I'll let you figure that one out.

Paul spoke of himself. I like that. Paul, an apostle and bond servant of Jesus Christ.

Different. He was an apostle by appointment. He was a bond servant by personal choice.

He was an apostle because God called him to be an apostle. He was a bond servant because he didn't want it any other way. So remember that those who served the Lord Jesus Christ out of a heart of love are worth twice as much as those who suppose that godliness is great gain.

We go on in the Old Testament. Commitment. Commitment in the Old Testament.

You know, no subject, no dissertation in this subject is complete unless you bring the lady here. I really believe that in general in the history of the Christian religion and of Judaism, too, ladies shine out with greater luster than men. It's true in the New Testament certainly, isn't it? Those who follow the Lord, the Lord Jesus.

And the culture in the Old Testament was very demeaning to women. Many of them rose above that to show the world what true devotedness really is. And two of them were ladies.

Two of those ladies, each of them has a book in the Bible named after her. I think that's great. We're talking about Ruth and Esther.

Ruth is really a bright star in the galaxy of the committed ones. She had a fiercely loyal commitment to Naomi, didn't she? Not only to Naomi, but to Naomi's God as well. Naturally speaking, Ruth was kind of anonymous.

She was what they would call today a non-person. She came from a despised race, you know, the Moabites. She came from a family of nobodies.

And she came from a race that was cursed by God and despised by God's people. She was a woman, a sex that was depreciated in that culture. Her husband died.

She was a widow and left her a childless. And her mother-in-law was a Jew, an alien, a foreigner in Ruth's homeland. And then came that moment which the poet says comes to every man and nation, the moment to decide.

Naomi was going to go back to Bethlehem, Judah. And the question was would Ruth go back with her? Orpah had made her mind up she would not go back. And Ruth was determined that she would go back with her.

Her decision is a classic of commitment. I don't think there's anything in the Old Testament like it. What did she say? She said, Don't ask me to leave you and turn back.

I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God. I will die where you die and will be buried there.

May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us. That's great, isn't it? Don't ask me to leave you. Don't even think about it.

Don't even mention the word she's saying. I've made up my mind to follow you. There's no turning back.

Let us just examine the extent of her devotedness in the words that she spoke. She had a new person to follow. Don't ask me to leave you.

It was something, you know. Naomi gets a bad press among a lot of preachers. They think of her as a backslider and all of that.

Poor woman. I tell you, Ruth saw something in Naomi. She realized that she was a woman of God.

She realized that she was a mother in Israel. She saw a greatness in her. And she thought, this mother in Israel is worthy to be followed.

A new place to live. She said, where you live, I will live. That's something.

She suppressed her own nationalistic spirit, her love for Moab. She was willing to make a break with family and friends and her native environment. She's a new family.

Your people will be my people. She became a Jewish proselyte. Really a convert to Judaism.

A daughter of Abraham by adoption. She cast in her lot with God's people. You're despised by the world, yet the excellence of the earth.

And then she said, a new religion. Your God will be my God. Oh boy, that was saying goodbye to all the pagan gods of Moab.

All the idols of Moab. All the rituals and shrines of Moab. And she embraced the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Japheth when she said that.

I want to tell you, dear friends, this is commitment. A new place to die. She said, where you die, I will die.

What was she saying? It's going to be a lifelong commitment. A lifelong commitment. I'm going to be with you when you die, and when you die, I will die.

She wanted to be identified with Naomi in her death as well as in her life. And this is what we should be saying in baptism, isn't it? Where you die, I will die. Identifying myself with the Lord Jesus in the waters of baptism.

I hope all that were here tonight are believers and are baptized. You say, Brother McCollins, you know that baptism is not necessary for salvation. I know it's not.

I also know if you're not baptized and go to heaven, that way you'll never be baptized. Because there are no baptisteries in heaven. The Presbyterians think they can get baptized in the river of life.

I think it's a misconception. A new burial place. Where you are buried, I will be buried.

That's interesting. Traditionally, people wanted to go back to where they came from to be buried. You know, the patriarchs in the Old Testament did.

Didn't they? Jacob and Joseph, they wanted to go back and have their bodies transported from Egypt to Canaan. She didn't care for anything. Even salmon want to do that.

They want to go back to the place where they began and die there. They didn't want that. Where you're buried, I will be buried.

Here she was, an obscure young widow. She committed herself without reservation to the God of Israel. As a result, she married a man of outstanding character.

She became an ancestress of the Messiah. She had a book of the Bible named after her. Dear friends, you never know the day you commit your life to the Lord Jesus for service to what great things he has in store for you.

When Ruth made that decision, she had no idea what God had planned for her. Just think of that. Married to Boaz, great man.

Came right into the line of the Messiah. What could be more wonderful than that? Had a book in the Bible named after her. Memorialized forever.

You never know the day you turn over your life to the Lord. You make that total commitment to him, you never know what he has in store for you. The other woman, of course, was Esther.

And I want to tell you, you and I wouldn't be talking about her tonight if she had waffled. If she hadn't come clean, we wouldn't be talking about her tonight. I want to tell you, it was a marvelous converging of circumstances that brought a Jewish maiden to the throne of Persia.

Wow. To be queen. The public thought it was her beauty.

Wiser minds knew it was her God who arranged it. The marvelous converging of circumstances of God in that film. The timing was absolutely perfect.

She was in power when her cousin Mordecai uncovered a plot against the king and reported it. She was in power when murderous Haman nearly succeeded in having Mordecai hanged on a gallow. And she was in power when that villainous anti-Semite had succeeded in having a decree written that the Jews in the kingdom would be exterminated.

The name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther, but God is very prominent in the book of Esther. He's behind the scenes keeping watch about his own. Now the spotlight is on Esther.

Would she go into the king and plead for her people and for herself because her fate was linked with the fate of her people. There were two problems. To approach the king even if he was her husband to approach him if he didn't hold out the golden scepter death for her to approach the king.

I suppose this was to protect the king against assassins don't you think so? Protect the king against assassins. But the other thing was that they had not had marital relations for a month. So really it was which side was risky for her to go before the king.

If you leave God out it was risky. But to help her make her decision Mordecai sent them word that if she didn't do it God would raise something somebody else to do but she would miss the blessing. And she wouldn't be spared any more than the rest of the Jews.

He really believed that God would somehow restore the Jews although he didn't know how but she would miss the blessing of being their savior. And then he topped his appeal with those memorable words who

know it but thou art come to the kingdom at such a time as this. You know I think that's a word we can take to ourselves.

How do you know but you're come to the kingdom at such a time as this. How do you know if you turn your life over to the Lord he might not be God's key in certain situations in life. I believe it with all my heart.

Well that was all Esther needed. She called on her on her assistants the Jews and the citadel she called on them to fast for three days. It doesn't say to pray but I tell you you don't fast without praying do you? So fasting and prayer for three days.

And then she said I'll go to the king. She said if I perish I perish with commitment. She was laying her life on the line for the Lord.

If she hadn't made that decision we wouldn't be fasting by the way. It paid off. The king showed grace to her.

She was able to expose Haman and the terrible plot that had been drawn up against the Jews. That decree couldn't be changed but another decree was made allowing the Jews to defend themselves. Their victory was great when the appointed time came and God even gave them extra time for a mopping up operation.

Lesson. Commitment to Christ to God receives its greatest test in the fires of adversity. Receives its greatest test in the fires of adversity.

We move on. I just want to mention Caleb briefly. Caleb that guy they say old soldiers don't die they just fade away.

Well here's an old soldier who didn't fade away. When he was 85 when he was 85 he said he wanted Hebron. He said give me this mountain.

I like that. Don't you? You're never too old to be obedient to the Lord. You're never too old to be committed to the Lord.

He wanted to drive the Anakim out of Hebron. Remarkable words for an 85 year old soldier who could have been fading away in quiet obscurity. Listen to the listen to the tribute that's paid to Caleb.

He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. What an epitaph. He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

Then of course it was Jonathan. I like Jonathan as a illustration of commitment. He was committed to David.

Jonathan was next in line to the throne. He was to succeed Saul. He knew that David was God's choice.

He took off his robe the robe signifying that he was heir apparent to the throne. He gave it to David. That's really commitment.

Meryl Unger writes, His most remarkable characteristic was his ardent and unselfish devotion to his friends, which led him to give up his hopes to the throne, even expose himself to death for the sake of those he loved. Notwithstanding that his affection for his father was repelled by the latter, owing to the king's insanity, he cast his lot with his father's decline, and in death they were not divided. Remarkable.

The fact that Jonathan didn't join David in exile shouldn't be allowed to diminish the truth of his large-heartedness. David had some tremendous followers. I'd love to read about some of David's followers and how committed they were to him.

One of them was Amasai. He was the chief captain who came to David. He had a big leg. We don't know much about him.

In fact, he's mentioned in only one verse of the Bible. One verse of the Bible. Amasai.

But he's memorable because of the eloquent pledge he made to David. Let me read it to you. We are yours, O David.

We are on your side, O son of Jesse. Peace to you and peace to your helpers for your God helped you. Did you think that pleased David when he heard him say so? Do you think it pleases the Lord Jesus when we say that to him? We are yours, Lord Jesus.

We are on your side, O son of David. I think the Savior's heart beats just a little faster when he hears us say that to him. Ittai was another soldier who was sold out to the king.

A Gentile. A Gentile. You wouldn't expect a Gentile to be that loyal to a Jewish king, would you? He was.

And when David fled from Jerusalem as a result of Absalom's treason, the king tried to dissuade Ittai from going with him into exile. And what did Ittai say? He said, As the Lord lives, and as my Lord the king lives, in whatever place my Lord the king shall be, whether in life or death, even there also shall your servant be. And then, of course, there were the three valiant soldiers who were with David there in the cave of Adullam.

And one day, David was reminiscing, and he was thinking back to the well in Bethlehem. There was no water like that well. And how it is you think back to your childhood and how things tasted, how things were when you were young, and he just let that sigh slip out from his lips.

As you know, for those three men, they snapped to attention. They said, Your desire is our command, sir. They didn't say those words, but that's their attitude.

Your desire is our command, sir. And they went through enemy lines at the risk of their life to get water from the well of Bethlehem for those who were committed. It was really commitment.

All that mattered to them was to please their master. Please their leader. It was worth their lives just to give them a glass of water.

David was so pleased with that, did he drink it? It might seem like ingratitude on David's part, but it wasn't. He poured it on the ground. He said, Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this.

Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? I want to tell you, if David was pleased by that act, how much more pleased the Savior must be, David's greater son must be when he finds that type of commitment among his followers. You know, the Lord Jesus is thirsty tonight. Do you know that? He's thirsting for the souls of men in Africa, in Asia, in South America, and other parts of the world.

I want to tell you that he is pleased with his part. When he sees people who are committed and willing to leave all to follow him there. Another man I have to mention, he's one of my favorite characters in the Old

Testament, Uzziah.

He was one of David's coaches, and he was a Gentile, too. He was the wife of Bathsheba, Bathsheba with whom David had committed adultery. This man is off in a battle, fighting the king's battle.

There's his wife at home, falling into sin. And when Uriah comes back in pretended generosity, David grants him rest and rehabilitation leave. So he'll go back to his house.

And, of course, it's to create the impression that the baby to be born would be Uriah's baby. It was a plot. But, you know, the faithfulness of Uriah foiled David's plan.

Be true to Jesus, though a thousand voices from the world may call. Listen to Uriah's dedication. He said, The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open field.

Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink and to lie with my wife as you live and as your soul lives? I will not do this then. I want to tell you something tonight, David was not worthy of a man like that. And then, of course, we have to think of Daniel and his three friends.

And they're there in Persia, you know. And the king notices them. You know, cream always rises to the surface, doesn't it? He has a way of doing that.

And the king notices these men, and so he decides to melt them down and recycle them as Babylonians. He's going to change their name, he's going to change their language, he's going to change their diet, their lifestyle, their culture, he's going to change their religion. You know, their Hebrew names all had the name of God in them, all of them.

For instance, Daniel, God is my judge. Hananiah, Jehovah is gracious. Mishiel, who is like God? Azariah, Jehovah is my helper or keeper.

You know, their Babylonian names that he gave them all had the name of some Babylonian God in it. Incredible, really. Belteshazzar, Bel, the national god.

Shadrach, perhaps the moon god or the city god. Meshach, means I'm humbled before my God, but not the God of Abraham, Isaac, Abednego, servant of Israel. Well, it's interesting, the first real temptation came in the area of food.

It's funny how temptation was never an easy one, wasn't it? No big deal. Came in the area of food and drink. Seems quite harmless.

They were told to accept the royal menu. But there was a problem, dear friend. The royal menu was the best food in all the world.

It was gourmet cooking from start to finish. But, it was probably food that had been offered to idols. It wasn't kosher food.

It would have violated the food code of the nation of Israel. Of course, they could eat the food without endorsing it in their hearts. They could eat it and say, well, my heart's not in it, you know.

Or they could say, well, nobody would know. We're enclosed here in the palace and nobody would know that they were doing it. The fellow Jews would certainly never know.

Besides, everybody was doing it. They didn't consider that. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with a portion of the king's food.

But Daniel was a wise man, too, and so he worked out a compromise and said, look, just put us on a vegetarian diet and we'll put this matter to the test. And they did. They put them on this vegetarian diet.

Ten days later, the king found them to be more handsome, quite an incentive, wiser, more understanding than all the others. He had to admit, this is good, he had to admit that they were ten times better than his own magicians. By sticking to their principles, it might seem a rather minor matter, they were honored by God and prepared for what would prove to be a severe attack.

And the severe attack wasn't long in coming. The king had a dream and he got a giant ego trip and he had this tremendous eight-story monument erected and he sent out a decree that nobody was going to pray, that everybody was going to bow down. On the day of the dedication, everyone was going to bow down and worship.

And the penalty for refusing was to be thrown into the burning fire. My word, I tell you, my mind could work over time now to ensure it. Escape route.

I think Daniel, Daniel's not mentioned here. I think he was away at the time, but, you know, his example wasn't lost on those three fellows. By now, they had signs of steel.

They would rather go to heaven with a good conscience than stay on earth with a bad one. I think it was the court advisors who reported them that they weren't worshiping false signs. They were jealous because these fellows had been promoted to be heads over the province.

And when the king heard it, he couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe that anybody would dare to defy his order. Did they think that their God could rescue them from his power? And the young Hebrews knew that he couldn't.

So when the king delivered his final ultimatum, they said, I like this, Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us from your hands, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your God, nor will we worship the

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