Committed to Christ's Work

Selected Scriptures
1/27/08

Introduction: 1 Cor. 16:15

**** I must be committed to my Savior's Work as long as I live!***

What is commitment to Christ's Work?

When I am committed to the Work of my Lord,

I. I will endure hardship but keep on going
(1 Cor. 16:9; I Cor. 15:58)

When I am committed to the Work of my Lord,

II. I will prioritize what matters to Him over my earthly securities
(Matthew 6:33)

When I am committed to the Work of my Lord,

III. I will follow Him and be willing to forsake all hindrances
(Matthew 19:27-29)

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Introduction: Work

From NY to LA, from Wall Street to Main Street, work dominates the landscape of modern life.

It is said that the average man spends 40-60 % of his waking hours on the job.

However, many people are afraid to work. Just thinking about it can ruin their whole day. A bumper sticker read: "The worst day of fishing is better than the best day of work"

Do you work hard or hardly work?

Someone said: "Salt from the sweat of work preserves the soul."

Several truths about work:

1. Work was established by God before the fall of Adam, but it was complicated after (Gen. 2:15; 3:17-19)

2. Work is God's appointed way for man to make a living and provide for his needs (Prov. 6:6-11, 10:4, 13:4, 11; I Th. 4:11; II Th. 3:6-12)

3. Work is basically a service we perform for others. Every worker is a servant.

Life is about serving others and meeting needs.

Through our jobs, we not only earn a livelihood and provide for ourselves and our families; but we also serve humanity through providing some needed product or service.

Secret to starting a successful business: find out a need and meet it.

There is a work that takes priority to the Christian over all other work; It is the work of the Lord!

1 Corinthians 16:15
I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints…

***"First fruits"* -** The first converts, the first ones to accept the Gospel in the province of Achaia (to see "charter members" be faithful through thick and thin is a rich blessing).

To be addicted to cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs is not good. But it's good to be addicted to a good thing!

An addict is one who is hooked on something. He is devoted to it. What should we be devoted to?

Answer: The service to the saints. The humble waiting on God's set- apart people.

The word translated "addicted" (KJV) means that these believers viewed service to God's people as a duty they were joyfully committed to. No one made them serve; no one appointed them. Rather, they, of their own will, voluntarily gave themselves over to a life of enlistment in "saint service." God give us a servant's heart!

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What is commitment to Christ's Work?

When I am committed to the Work of my Lord,

I. I will endure hardship but keep on going
(1 Cor. 16:9; I Cor. 15:58)

1 Corinthians 16:9
For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.

"A great door" - A big, wide door (an opportunity to reach many souls).

"Effectual" - Effective, active, powerful (an opportunity to see life-changing ministry take place).

"Is opened" - God does the opening of doors.

"Unto me" - God personally uses specific individuals for specific tasks at a specific time.

Hence, the need to *"be ready always*." When the Spirit moves, be ready to be used.

We must "strike while the iron is hot"; "get while the getting is good"; "make hay while the sun shines."

"Redeem the time because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16).

Ask yourself: "What opportunities is God giving me to serve Him today?"

"Many adversaries" - Whenever God is moving (doing a great work), the devil is the first to find out about it. He quickly utilizes his co-workers to oppose God's work (EX: Sanballat & Tobiah, who sought to hinder Nehemiah's work; Elymas the Sorcerer, who sought to hinder Sergius Paulus from becoming saved).

Expect confrontation. If you never experience opposition, maybe it is because you are doing nothing for God.

1 Corinthians 15:58
Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT **YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD!**

THE LORD'S WORK IS WORTH EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY YOU PUT INTO IT!

"labor" = That which leads to exertion and results in fatigue & exhaustion.
cp. I Cor.15:15,16 "fellow laborers with Paul"
cp. I Tim. 5:17 "to labor in preaching & teaching"
cp. I Th. 1:3 "labor of love"

Paul said that he did not run in vain or toil in vain. Phil.2:16

"The Lord's chosen ones shall not toil in vain" (Is.65:23)

"vain" = Empty, without content, without result or profit, fruitless, ineffective.

ex. Giving a cup of cold water in Christ's name will bring with it a reward.

- Serving Christ's children is serving Christ Himself (Read Mt.25:31-46; *v.40,45.)
- Mary's anointing of Jesus with a years wages worth of perfume was not in vain.
  (Mt. 26:6-13).
  (Note: the disciples' response: "Why this waste?" and Jesus' answer)
- Israel who did not want to rebuild God's temple after the Babylonian captivity. They lived for self-interest (which proved to be vain; ex. "putting wages in bags with holes) The prophet Haggai calls on them to "consider your ways" (See Hag.1:2-8).

If you believe that your labor is not vain in the Lord you will make 3 resolutions regarding your service for Jesus Christ:

A. I WILL NOT QUIT in my service for Christ!
("Steadfast")

Steadfast = settled, solid, permanent stable, persistent.
An ability to withstand assault.
This word is translated "settled" (Col.1:23) and "steadfast" (I Cor.7:37) in describing a strong determination in the heart. And the noun form is translated "ground" in I Tim.3:15 describing the Local Church as the pillar and ground (secure protector) of the truth.

We often use the expression to our children when they are fidgety: "Stay right where your are and don't move"; This is the idea Paul has in mind when commanding us to be steadfast, and unmovable.

BECAUSE WE SERVE A LIVING, RESURRECTED SAVIOR OUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN! THEREFORE HANG IN THERE! STICK TO IT! DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP! DON'T QUIT! "Be not weary in well doing...we shall reap..."

B. I WILL NOT MOVE from my service for Christ!
("unmovable")

"unmovable" = to not change direction, or go from one place to another, to flee (Is.22:3), or to remove - ex. removing the ancient landmarks (Dt.19:14).

Today we a living in a society that thrives on change (everything needs to be new or different)

Some things do need changing. And some things must never change. You must never be distracted (even with good things) from your service to Christ.

You must lay your all on the altar and leave it there!

"The only problem with "living Sacrifices" (Rom.12:1,2) is that they keep crawling off the alter." - Dr. Joseph Aldrich

Don't detour off of the straight and narrow road to serving Christ! "Someone is reported to have asked a concert violinist in New York's Carnegie Hall how she became so skilled. She said that it was by `planned neglect'. She planned to neglect everything that was not related to her goal." - John MacArthur

One test of a man's character is determined by what it will take to move him from what he believes and practices.

When faithfulness is most difficult, it is most necessary.

C. I WILL NOT BECOME <u>COMPLACENT</u> in my service for Christ
("Always abounding")

"**Always abounding** in the work of the Lord"

To "abound" = To do more than enough. To excel, to exceed profusely, beyond measure, surplus, overflowing, to overflow the boundaries.

If we have ever done more for Christ than we are presently doing, then we are backslidden. We should be doing more for God this year than last year.

Another reason we ought to "abound" in our service for Christ is because it is not our work, it is the "<u>work of the Lord</u>". He is our master, our boss. Ill. of workers who while on the job look for opportunities to goof off - waste time - look for ways to just get by.

If we could ask <u>Noah:</u> "was it in vain to build the Ark?"
If we could ask <u>Moses</u>: "was it in vain to lead Israel?"
If we could ask <u>Daniel</u>: "was it in vain to stand up for God?"
If we could ask <u>Paul</u>: "was it in vain to plant over 100 churches?"
They would all respond **<u>no!</u>** It was worth every ounce of energy I invested in it!

No one will ever waste His time, energy, money etc. while involved in the work of the Lord! (Note: <u>it is His work, not ours</u>; for ex. this is not <u>my</u> church it is His-I Pet.5)

Vain pursuits in life: living for self, pleasure, fame, money, career. They will all come to a screeching halt one day! You need to invest in that which will last for eternity!

* There are no <u>regrets</u> from those who are faithful to the Lord!

Because Jesus lives, my labor is not in vain!
He is coming back! And His "reward is with Him"

Ex. the song: "I wonder if I've done my best for Jesus..."

When I am committed to the Work of my Lord,

II. I will prioritize what matters to Him over my earthly securities
(Matthew 6:33)

Matthew 6:33
But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Just as God feeds the birds (v. 26), and just as God clothes the grass and adorns it with flowers (v. 30), so He will (much more) see to it that His children have adequate food & clothing.

"O ye of little faith" - Worry is always the result of unbelief or little faith.

Those who worry much, believe little. Those who worry little, believe much!

Examples of worry being caused by little faith:

1)The tempest at sea (Mt. 8:23-27; *v. 26)

2)Peter walking on water (Mt. 14:27-32; *v. 31)

3)The disciples who worried about a lack of bread (Mt. 16:8), even after Jesus miraculously provided it on two previous occasions.

ILLUS: One day when he was away from home someone came running up to John Wesley saying: "Your house has burned down! Your house has burned down!" To which Wesley replied, "No, it hasn't, because I don't own a house. The one i have been living in belongs to the Lord, and if it has burned down, that is one less responsibility for me to worry about." (MacArthur, p. 420)

v. 33 - "Seek ye first" -

"Seek" -to zealously look after or earnestly live for (in contrast to what the Gentiles "seek" [v. 32], we are to seek something else).

"First" - a word showing priority. Ahead of seeking for what to eat, drink, or wear (v. 31), we are to prioritize God's kingdom. We are to view the eternal as more important than the temporal (v. 19-20), the priorities of God over the priorities of the Gentiles (i.e. the world).

"The kingdom of God" = seek to live for those things which will advance or benefit the cause of Christ

We advance God's kingdom by 3 ways:

1)Concern yourself with witnessing to the lost (I Cor. 15:3; Jn. 1:41)

2)Concern yourself with assembling with God's people (I Cor. 16:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25)

3)Concern yourself with giving to God's work (Prov. 3:9)

When your own financial interests come ahead of God and the needs of His work, the result is frustration and loss (Haggai 1:2-9)

"And His righteousness" - Seek to live up to true, Biblilcal righteousness; seek to be right as God counts rightness, not as the world does.

You can seek His righteousness by:

1) Concerning yourself with knowing His standards of righteousness / Make Bible reading your priority (Job 23:12; Ps. 119:72, 97; Mt. 4:4)

"A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't" (C. H. Spurgeon)

2) Concerning yourself with obeying His standards of righteousness / Internal purity (being clean on the inside) must come first in our lives (Mt. 23:26 - *"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cub and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."*)

The cause of worry is seeking the things of this world. The cure for worry is to seek the things of God!

One who is pre-occupied with God's interests will have his physical needs met.

If you take care of God's business, He will take care of yours!

Live for that which you can take into heaven with you. John 6:27 - *"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."*

"All these things (food, water, and clothing) will be added unto you" -

Note: This promise does <u>not</u> apply to everyone! If it did, no one would ever die of starvation. Rather, this promise is for God's children, for those who have God as their "<u>Father</u>: (v. 26) through faith in Christ.

God feeds His kids - Ps. 37:25 - *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seek the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."*

When I am committed to the Work of my Lord,

III. I will follow Him and be willing to forsake all hindrances
(Matthew 19:27-29)

V. 27

"Behold <u>we</u> have forsaken all..." - In contrast to the rich young ruler (19:16-26) who was unwilling to forsake his materialism and follow Christ (v. 21-22), Peter is quick to speak on behalf of the disciples and to inquire as to what he and they would get for their "great" sacrifice.

"What shall we have therefore?" - Because of our sacrifice, <u>what's in it for us</u>? What will we get? What fortune do we have to look forward to?

EX: The human nature of man causes him naturally to have a "<u>What's in it for me?" attitude</u>.

***Observe Christ's promises to those who forsake all to follow Him:**

A. To the <u>12 Disciples</u> Christ promised:
A <u>POSITION AS JUDGE</u> in the future regenerated Kingdom (19:28)

"Verily" - truly; most assuredly; you can count (bank) on this

"Ye which have followed me" - speaking of the disciples (excluding Judas) who left their jobs, families, hometowns, etc., for 3 1/2 years to follow Christ.

"In the regeneration" - The time when God makes all things <u>new again</u>; the time when this present creation receives its <u>new birth</u>, its total renovation.

Paul referred to the renewal of the earth and heavens (sky) in this way: *"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* (Acts 3:20-21)

"When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory" - In Christ's Kingdom after the Rapture and Day of the Lord Judgments

See: Psalm 2:1-12; Is. 2:1-4, 4:2-6, 9:6-7, 11:1-12, 35:1,10, 40:1-5, 55:12-13, 65:17-25

Zech. 6:13 - *"Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."*

There will be eating and drinking in the kingdom (Luke 22:30 - *"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.")*

"Ye" -the disciples were promised that they would sit on 12 thrones, each judging a tribe of Israel [Note: Matthias (Acts 1:26) would replace (Acts 1:20) Judas as one of the twelve.]

"<u>Judging</u> the twelve tribes of Israel" - This judging indicates that there will be mortals and sinners present when the Son of Man sits in the throne (SEE: Dan. 7:8-9, 13-22; Rev. 20:4-6).

"The twelve tribes of Israel" - Will be Jews who are saved at the end of the Tribulation (SEE: Rom. 11:25-31).

Zech. 12:9-10 - *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."*

(cp. Rev. 7:7-8, 14:1-5)

B. To Every one who forsakes all to follow Him, Christ promised: A "HUNDRED-FOLD" in this present life (19:29)

Jesus is not commanding us to forsake these situations and people, but if a choice between loyalties to Jesus conflicted with loyalties to such other things, the choice should be Jesus (Mt. 10:37).

For the disciples to physically follow Jesus while He was on earth did literally demand such a 3-1/2 year abandonment.

"Shall receive an hundred-fold" -

When? A hundred-fold in this life

What? Mk. 10:30 - *"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."* Luke 18:29-30 - *"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."*

A hundred-fold of that which you forsook (spiritual brothers and sisters, etc., Cp. Mt. 12:48)

Jim Elliot, a young missionary martyred by the Auca Indians of Ecuador whom he was seeking to reach for Christ, wrote shortly before his death, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose" (cited by MacArthur, p. 206).

"Shall inherit everlasting life" - Everlasting life is a gift given, not a reward earned. Gaining eternal life is not because of forsaking worldly attachments, but gaining eternal life is the outcome of a saved soul whose salvation manifested itself by a willingness to forsake all and follow Christ.