

b. God's necessity

The message of Christianity is extremely narrow. God does not withhold any bars. He moves all who are sinners through the one Door, even our Lord Jesus Christ (John 10:9). There is no access to God except through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Peter clearly affirmed this (Acts 4:12). All other suggestions for meeting man's horrible need are not adequate nor true.

c. Eternity's nearness

The words of our Lord stand out (Rev. 22:20). That was recorded nearly 2000 years ago. How close the time must now be. The political developments, the moral debauchery, and the tremendous apostasy all lead us to believe that we are closer to the end of this dispensation of grace than many would like to think. Now is the time for salvation. Now is time for the body to be alerted to worldwide preaching of the Gospel in as earnest an effort as possible.

Conclusion What then does total commitment mean for us as a church (this local body of Christ)? It means we need to function--all of us. It means we need to be financially involved--all of us. It means that we need to evangelize the lost--all of us. God give us a heaven sent Holy Spirit response to this call for TOTAL COMMITMENT. To God be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

TOTAL COMMITMENT

"Church"

Ephesians 4:25

Introduction

1. The pressure of the total commitment concept is overwhelming. It is a huge roadblock which stands between ordinary Christian experience and the life which wins. No believer really experiences full blessing in his life until all is laid on the altar for God (Rom. 12:1, 2).

2. The same is true for homes. When a father, mother, and children are under the control of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), then the fruit of the Spirit are enjoyed in that home (Gal. 5:22, 23).

3. Total commitment also concerns the body of believers in any local situation. Mind you, the church is not the building in which a group of believers meets. The believers are the building of God (1 Cor. 3:9). They are also called the body (Eph. 1:22, 23). All believers get into the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). That takes place at the moment of salvation. There is no such thing as a baptism of the Spirit to seek or experience subsequent to salvation. Such teaching is not supported by Scripture. Hence, by all of us being in the body, we are members one of another (Eph. 4:25).

4. There are many areas in which total commitment for the body is required or expected. Here are three of them:

1. FUNCTIONALLY

The big issue here is that not one single member of the body is able to do the action of the total body. All members must be active. Consider:

a. Individuality in the body vv. 15, 16.

It is clear from these two verses that there are distinct members within the body. While this is true of the human body by common consent, it is also true of the spiritual "body" of believers (1 Cor. 12:27).

b. Diversity in the body vv. 14, 17-24.

Not any particular member of the human body can

claim to be it all. The very diversity is for the full and adequate functioning of the total. The logic of the argument which Paul advances here (v. 17) is applied to any member of the body (v. 19). While each member is unique, he is not alone in the body. All are necessary and complementary.

c. Unity in the body vv. 25-26.

The very arrangement of the human body parallels that of the "body" of Christ. The whole intent is three-fold:

1) Total unity No schism or divisions.

2) Total concern Every member is to watch for the other to bring about the dignity of the whole.

3) Total sensitivity Here is a precious word of mutuality. No selfish solicitude can be advanced.

2. FINANCIALLY

The church is a New Testament concept. There was no church until the baptism with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), so there is no such thing as an Old Testament church. The law of the Old Testament was given to Israel as a nation, not to the church as a body (Ex. 19:1, 7, 8, 25, plus all the Pentateuch; cf. Rom. 6:14). That being true, the "tithe" is not for a member of the body. In any case, the Old Testament tithe was more than 1/10th of one's income. Note the three tithes in the Old Testament (Lev. 27:30-32; Num. 18:20-32; Deut. 14:23-27; 14:28, 29). Later on under Samuel, it was predicted that there would be a tax imposed by their king (1 Sam. 8:14, 15) which amounted to a tenth. Besides these tithes, there were the offerings (Lev. 1-7). All of these verses point out that a minimum tax in the Old Testament would be over 33% and there was really no maximum, if offerings are considered. Contrary to this, what does the New Testament propose for those who are believers on Christ under the grace system? Mark the summary (1 Cor. 16:1, 2):

a. Give systematically

This relates to the first day of the week (the Lord's Day on which He rose from the dead).

b. Give personally

The words "everyone of you" does not exclude the poor or less fortunate than others. All are to participate in one way or another.

c. Give habitually

The verb here suggests "laying up a store" as one would a treasure. Then the treasure is given to the Lord. How many who have laid aside for a "rainy day" could be influenced to lay aside "for the Lord's day?!?"

d. Give proportionately

The verb means to "guide one happily on his journey." So it is. As God guides the believer happily on his journey, he should give. It is the result of the providential provision of the Lord. Think of it: many in the early church were slaves! But they were "prospered" and they were to give. How much more in modern materialistic America!

e. Give regularly

Paul discouraged special offerings. He felt that as the members of the local body at Corinth were giving as they should, there would be no necessity for special offerings. That text has never changed! God's program carried out by God's people will always bring God's blessing.

3. EVANGELISTICALLY

The body cannot neglect those who are outside. It is challenged to reach them. This is the import of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). But this has three urgent bases. Here they are:

a. Man's need

This is summarized in the argument of Paul (Rom. 3:23). Sinners all men are. As such, they stand in horrendous need for salvation. The heathen (good term!) are all around us. They grope for light but sit in darkness. God help us to see non-believers as they really are: lost and dying in sin!