

Committed to the Course

Acts 20:18-24

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Introduction:

We should never lift up any person to the place that we worship him or her—which is being done in our culture in the world of sports and entertainment! We even have a highly rated show called, “American Idol.” However, it is proper and right to give high regard and honor to those who are worthy of our respect because of their Christ-like attributes.



The Apostle Paul certainly qualifies as a worthy New Testament hero for his outstanding character in many areas. In this message, we are going to focus on one of his many qualities—His Commitment. Paul let nothing move him from God’s call and the course that was laid out before him! Let’s look at Acts 20, and especially verse 24, to learn how to be more committed!

God used this passage of Scripture to call me to New York City to plant a church. After a summer-long ministry in New York City in 1971, I had a huge burden for the millions of souls there in that vast city. However, like Jonah of old, I was running from God’s call to go there full-time. After marrying Donna in April of 1972 and thinking of rearing a family, going to an inner-city didn’t appeal to me as an ideal place for the best environment for that task. High prices, constant traffic, crowded living conditions, smog, a high crime rate, and many other negatives were my excuses for not yielding to God’s call. On October 2nd, 1972 (my last semester of graduate school at Bob Jones University), a missionary from Holland came to the pulpit in the chapel service. William Van Reijn announced Acts 20:23 and 24 as his text and then said, “As I was flying to the States from Holland, I was thinking how badly my nation needs more missionaries. But, coming in to Kennedy Airport, I looked down on New York City and thought, now there is a city that really needs a missionary.” He had my attention. He preached a passionate message on all the excuses people give for not going to the mission field (he named all of mine), and that Paul let nothing move him from doing what God wanted him to do! Right there and then I surrendered to go to New York City to plant a church.

PRAYER

The Person who is committed...

1. Has a Selfless Devotion Loves the Lord Jesus Christ and the souls of men more than his own life.

“neither count I my life dear unto myself”

Has the Right Priorities

2 Corinthians 5:15 “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.”

Paul’s amazing testimony of transformation. He truly loved the Lord and the souls of men! Look down to verses 26-32 of Acts 20 to see Paul’s selfless devotion. He cared for the lost & the local church.

The Parable of the Chicken and the Pig

A chicken and a pig were on their way to the Old McDonald Baptist Church one Sunday morning when they saw a sign in the church yard—“Church-wide breakfast next Sunday morning.” The chicken said to the pig, “Why don’t we get our families to cooperate and provide the breakfast next Sunday!?” The pig replied, “Wait a minute! For you and your family, that’s a simple donation; but, for me and my family that would be a total commitment.”



Commitment sees a higher goal than self-fulfillment and self-promotion! Christ said in Luke 9:23, “If any *man* will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)

The Person who is committed...

2. Has a Steadfast Determination Lets no Opposition or Hardship move him from staying on the Course

“But none of these things move me”

Has a Right Outlook (on life)

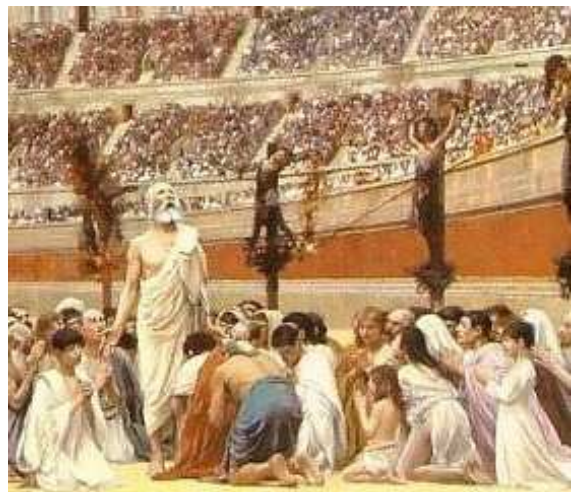
What things?—verses 22 and 23. For an unbelievable list of things Paul endured, look with me at Second Corinthians 11:22-28!

*²²Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. ²³Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. **(That's a total of 195 lashes throughout his ministry)** ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

Any time that I begin having a pity party for myself, I turn to those verses to remind myself what Paul endured for the cause of Christ! Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” **He certainly could speak that with authority and authenticity!**

The 21st century American Christian has it too easy! We are a pampered generation, living in an age where little or no commitment is shown for anything: Marriage & family responsibilities, church membership and faithfulness to the services, loyalty to the pastor, evangelism, Christian service.

The First Century Church suffered and died for preaching the Gospel, but they counted it a privilege! In this Laodecian, lazy, lukewarm, pampered, self-centered, and affluent age (Revelation 3:13-22), the average Christian is content to sit, soak in, and sour—rather than sacrifice, surrender to God’s will, and serve the needs of others. May we wake up to our condition (1 Corinthians 15:34), and live for Christ, for the eternal more than the temporal, and for others!



Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, "The test of your character is what it takes to stop you."

The Person who is committed...

3. Has a Single Delight Lives for Christ and for the joy of finishing the course. "so that I might finish my course with joy"

Has the Right Goals

We need to raise a generation of finishers! There are far too many quitters among us.

Christ was a Finisher—Hebrews 12:2, and endured the Cross. He endured because of the joy that was set before Him. **Note the similar wording of Acts 20:24 and Heb. 12:2!**

Chorus by Doug Lowery, written in 1976:

**Don't Quit, there's a job to be done;
Don't Quit, there's a race to be run;
Don't Quit, there's a crown to be won;
Don't Quit, weary Christian, Don't Quit!**

Verses on Perseverance and Pressing On:

Galatians 6:9

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

I 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.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth

unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Note his words in the last chapter he ever penned—2 Timothy 4:7 and 8.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

REVIEW:

The Person who is committed...

1- Has a Selfless Devotion and has the Right Priorities

2- Has a Steadfast Determination and has the Right Outlook (on life)

3- Has a Single Delight and has the Right Goals

The Person Who is Committed...

4. Has Spiritual Discernment Looks at the Gospel and the eternal as more valuable than gold and the temporal.

“...and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Has the Right Values

❖ Knows the true value of the spiritual over the material.

Mark 8:36 tells us, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” In the context of our text for this message, we see that Paul had the right values. He was not covetous or materialistic. Note Acts 20:33-35: “I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

❖ Knows and sees the true view of the eternal over the temporal.
(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.”

Key phrase in our text: “the grace of God”

We need God’s grace for salvation and for service!

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Even Jesus needed the grace of God (Hebrews 2:9).

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.



**It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!
The sweetest, most anticipated words any
Christians could ever hear—“Well done, thou
good and faithful servant.”**

ARE YOU Committed?

Do you have a Selfless Devotion—with the Right Priorities?

Do you have a Steadfast Determination—with the Right Outlook?

Do you have a Single Delight—with the Right Goals?

Do you have Spiritual Discernment—with the Right Values?