

Our Commitment

Confession # 7: “We’ve Been Careless in Our Commitment”

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: 2 Corinthians 6

Date: July 24, 2011, 10:30am

Series: Confessions of an Imperfect Church

Introduction: Open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 6. We are in a series entitled “Confessions of an Imperfect Church”. The title of our message is “We’ve Been Careless About Our Commitment”.

Commitment is very important.

- **Drivers.** You should be glad when you get in my car that I am committed to getting you to your destination. If at any time I decide I am not committed to driving I could just jump out of the vehicle. Some people do that in their walk with God to dire consequences.
- If a **fireman** decides to take his sweet time in responding to a fire, people die.

Paul had been spent some significant time with the Corinthians. **Acts 18:11** (ESV) —“he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them [the Corinthians]”. What’s now going on in the church is alarming for Paul. They are neglecting their commitment to the Gospel because of some persuasive false teachers in the church.

False teachers have entered the church. They’re adding some “bling” to the church. They have a very outward emphasis. They’re great public speakers. They are not confronting the people about holiness. They are letting things slide. They do not believe that a real holiness necessarily follows true conversion.

And in exchange, the people are puffing up the false teachers. The problem is, some of the Corinthians are lacking are more committed to men than to God. Paul talks about three essentials to commitment in 2 Cor. 6.

The **TIME** for commitment (vs. 1-2) – *now!*

The **TESTIMONY** of commitment (vs. 3-13) –*selflessness*

The **TREASURE** of commitment (vs. 14-18) – *God’s presence!*

I. The **TIME** for commitment (vs. 1-2) – *now!*

2 Corinthians 6:1-2, (ESV) — “Working together with him [GOD], then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” [Isa. 49:8] Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

There is an urgency for those who receive the Gospel! The world is perishing.

- If a **farmer** takes his sweet time in planting, he doesn't have a crop.
- A. ***Every time the Word of Christ is preached, we should respond to it.*** We should never be the one who would “receive the grace of God in vain” – God has allowed us to live in a very special time, and He wants us to respond to Him. He wants us to do it immediately – NOW!

Peter

It's not just the Word of God, but it's also all the means of grace. Think of prayer! Peter was told Satan wanted to sift him like wheat, so watch and pray. He didn't and he ended up denying the Lord!

Paul – just a clay pot, just a ball of weakness. He gloried in his infirmities.

Even though Paul was preaching, he made it clear that it was really God speaking. Paul is teaching that everyone who teaches God's Word – from the least to the greatest Christian is “working together with him [GOD]”.

So it is with every true minister of the Gospel. As he is faithful to the Word of God, God speaks through him.

Paul was criticized by the Corinthians. He wasn't strong. He wasn't eloquent. His bodily presence was weak. He didn't WOW them or knock their socks off with his vocabulary or rhetoric. Yet, the power Paul depended on rested in the Word of God and not himself.

Paul loves the Corinthians. By and large he indicates that they do show true fruit of knowing Christ.

- **2 Cor. 7:4**, “I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort.”

It is utterly vital that each of us responds to the Word of God. We must do something with God's grace. Paul said “it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (**Ro 2:13**). Those who truly know Christ are not only those who hear Christ's Words, but **DO** them and build their house on a **ROCK!**

Yet though Paul indicates several times in this letter his belief that they are fellow believers, he does not know the heart of everyone, and he knows there are some among them who may be lost, and may “receive the grace of God in vain”.

In other words, there are people in the church who are just superficially connected to Christ's people and the Gospel. They are not committed.

B. ***Because we live in a day of fulfilled prophecy there is more urgency to respond to God's grace.*** There is only one word on God's clock. It is now. “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (**vs. 2**).

Illustration: If I receive ten cars, but only use one, I've received 9 in vain. If I give you ten bucks and tell you to go buy me a sprinkler for my dry yard, and you do

nothing with the money, you've received it in vain. God gives us His grace in the Gospel so that we will respond to it. Every time the Word is preached, God's grace is ready to enable you to complete whatever tasks God has for you.

2 For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." [Isa. 49:8] Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Paul is quoting **Isa. 49:8** directly from the *Septuagint* (Greek translation of OT).¹

God had said the day would come when God would bring a great time of grace and favor to His people. There would come an age of salvation, and an age of God pouring out His grace. Paul says, "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (vs. 2b).

We must take advantage of the day we are in. We are not in the day of the Old Testament shadow. We live in the New Testament realities. It is the favorable time of God's grace. We are living in a day where God is saving so many that it can be called, "The Day of Salvation". Think of this day not as an era. The Day of Radio was an amazing time. In terms of human history, today is the Day of Salvation.

No Hurry

Once a newly assigned demon was explaining his strategy to a veteran. "My plan," he said proudly, "is to convince the man that there is no God."

"No," said the senior devil, "That will not work. All the man has to do is take a look beyond the earth and he will know that God exists."

"Well, then," said the junior demon, "I will convince him that there is no devil."

"That is more promising," replied the veteran tempter, "but, still, if he takes a close look around his own neighborhood, he will realize that the devil exists. Here's the best plan. Don't try to convince him that there is no God or that there is no devil. Just tell him there is no hurry."

That's the devil's greatest deception – it's to forget about the TIME we live in. Friends NOW is the time! Today is the day of salvation.

Applications

1. Are you committed to Christ? Are you saved? If not, I appeal to you, and God appeals to you, now is the time of God's grace. Today is the day of salvation.
2. Are you committed to Christ's people? Are you a member of a local church? Are you serving Christ faithfully in His Body. Are you fitly joined and placed by the Holy Spirit in a local body?

¹ **Isaiah 49:8** (ESV) — 8 Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you."

3. Are you committed to applying God's Word to your life on a daily basis, or are you a complainer? "Nothing ever goes right with me!" But are you reading God's Word? Are you aggressively attacking areas of your life that do not please God with the sufficient Word of God?

I appeal to you, do not receive God's grace in vain my brothers and sisters! We are living in an amazing outpouring of God's grace. Don't receive it in vain! Respond to it NOW!!

Transition: So we see *the time for commitment* is now. Now let's look at:

II. The TESTIMONY of commitment (vs. 3-13) –*selflessness*

Paul was being accused of not being a true minister of the Gospel. Testimony is important.

- Where do you like to buy your cars? From the dealership or from the Used Car Lot?
- Are you going to buy a house from the guy who you just saw on COPS trying to swindle people?
- Reputation is important!

A. The minister be known as a true servant and shepherd (vs. 3-4).

3 We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way...

Paul felt an obligation to God that he protect the sheep. As we are going to see, he was willing to give up anything in order to lay down his life for the sheep. He wanted no indictment or stain on his name. He wanted nothing that would "put an obstacle in anyone's way" (**verse 3**).

Paul was not in the Gospel ministry for the fringe benefits. He was going to stand before God one day, and he took it seriously.

We are all going to give an account for those who we teach. The Bible says specifically of pastors and elders, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (**Heb 13:17**).

You should respond to your elders when they teach you. You should take advantage of the times they counsel you. Why? Because God is using them. They are working in tandem with God. And they "will have to give an account".

B. The minister should be known to endure hardness (vs. 4b-5).

2Tim. 2:3, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Negatives

4b by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;

Again, Oswald Chambers comments on 2 Cor. 6:4...

“It takes Almighty grace to take the next step when there is no vision and no spectator” – when you are in your kitchen – alone with your kids – at work – driving in the car – and all the pressures of life are on you.

the next step in devotion, the next step in your study, in your reading, in your kitchen; the next step in your duty, when there is no vision from God, no enthusiasm and no spectator. It takes far more of the grace of God, far more conscious drawing upon God to take that step, than it does to preach the Gospel.

“Every Christian has to partake of what was the essence of the Incarnation, he must bring the thing down into flesh and blood actualities and work it out through the finger tips. We flag when there is no vision, no uplift, but just the common round, the trivial task. The thing that tells in the long run for God and for men is the steady persevering work in the unseen, and the only way to keep the life uncrushed is to live looking to God. Ask God to keep the eyes of your spirit open to the Risen Christ, and it will be impossible for drudgery to damp you.

- C. The minister should be known to be godly and gentle (vs. 6-7). He is to lay his life down for the sheep.

Positives

6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; 7 by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;

- D. The minister should be not be controlled by the roller coaster of life (vs. 8-10).

Paradoxes

8 through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

- E. The minister should be in a place where his life commends his message (vs. 11-13). Things are better caught than taught.

Pleading

11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. 13 In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

III. The **TREASURE** of commitment (vs. 14-18) – *God’s presence!*

- A. To experience the treasure of God’s presence, we must live radically separate from the world (vs. 14-16a). There is an abandonment from the world. You as a Christian realize you are no longer committed to the world.

2 Cor. 5:14-16, “14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial² [*the worthless one – the one good for burning*]? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16a What agreement has the temple of God with idols?”

Who is Paul talking about? He’s speaking of a number of different things

1. We must expose false teachers. Primarily, he is talking about false teachers in the church (Naylor, MacArthur, Packer).

2 Cor. 11:12-14, “what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

Packer: “To be “unequally yoked” is to be “hitched up” or even crossbred with another animal who is not the same (Gk.*heterozygeō*; the related adjective is found in Lev. 19:19; see also Deut. 22:10, though the word does not occur there). It is thus an image for being allied or identified wrongly with unbelievers. In context, it refers especially to those who are still rebelling against Paul within the church, whom Paul now shockingly labels unbelievers.

Paul questions the salvation commitment that some of them had in **2 Corinthians 13:5** (ESV) — “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test

² **Belial** (Gk. *Beliar*, also spelled *Belial*, from a Hb. term meaning “worthlessness” or possibly “destruction”). This name for Satan is not found elsewhere in the OT or NT but was used in the Judaism of Paul’s day.

yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

2. We must live separate in our conduct and life. The principle has wider application to other situations where (as with animals yoked together) one person's conduct and direction of life strongly influences or controls the other's.”also pagan practices in the church, marriage with unbelievers (Hendrickson).

- Marriage
1 Corinthians 7:39, (ESV) – “A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”
- Business partnerships
- Churches, Christian organizations, i.e. Billy Graham
- Media choices
- I.e. Personal and ecclesiastical separation

B. Live radically close to God (vs. 14-16a).

2 Cor. 6: 16b-18, “16b For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

Conclusion: Are you committed to holy living for God? Are you committed to building up the body and to having community with your church family?

This commitment should define your entire life. **Matthew 6:33**, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you”.