

Commitment Unto Death

Roger Tointon—January 22, 2022

Greetings, everyone who are here, and to all of you out there, wherever you may be! I wish I could see you all. That would be a blessing on the Sabbath, especially.

I'm going to give a short message today that hopefully will resonate to us in this time in which we face. We're living in a time that's unprecedented in our life, yet I don't want to dwell on that. We've dwelt on that a lot in the past.

I'm really probably focusing more upon considering what's going on, considering the intensity of it.

- What about us?
- How do we fit into that picture?
 - ✓ what we should be doing
 - ✓ how our lives every day should be focused

We are literally coming into that time when we are going to have to focus very, very clearly and build our relationship with God Almighty and His Son as never before!

I'm going to start off by telling you a little story that happened in my life way back. I won't tell you how long ago, but I was probably in the second grade, so I was that young. Yet, it had a very real effect upon me, and not on me only, but upon my family.

We were on a little dirt farm down on the Solomon River in northern Kansas. It was my mom, dad and two brothers and me. You'll have to excuse me if I get emotional as it still affects me today, every time I think of it.

However, we were there on this little dirt farm and you know how three boys are at that age. My one brother was two years younger and the other brother was two years older. So, I'm right in the middle.

We loved to play and hated to be inside. We wanted to be in the outdoors, and our whole life was oriented to the outdoors. We were out playing. It was still winter and there was a little snow left around in the shade areas. All of a sudden I looked up and this very large German shepherd dog has come down the driveway into that space behind the house. It came quietly; we didn't notice it at first. But then there it was. I was excited to see a dog. We'd always wanted a dog and didn't have one.

In taking another look at the dog, the dog was in very, very bad shape. Even though it was a very large dog, you could count every one of its ribs, sores all over the body. She came up and was

cautious, but she came for help, and she definitely needed help.

I ran in and got mother and she came out and saw the dog and began to coach her over away from us boys, because the dog was leery of us. The dog saw mother and new that she had come to the right place for help.

Mother got her inside and got her by the wood cooking stove where it was warmer, got something for her to lay on and she began to do what she could for the dog. She had some salves and whatnot begin on the farm with some cattle around. Mother began to doctor and clean and put the salve and everything on.

That was the beginning. The dog laid there and I wanted so bad to pet her, but mother said, 'No, you be careful of the dog.'

Anyway, we went on and the dog began to warm up to other than just mom, and we began to be friends, everybody, with that dog. The dog began to put on some weight. Her paws were worn off to the flesh, the pads were gone.

This dog had been on the road for weeks. It had traveled hundreds of miles. We have no idea how far, but it didn't happen in a short distance, I'll tell you that. She would have died if she hadn't stopped to get help, and she did.

As the time went on, we really bonded with the dog, and she with us. But she had come there for help. She didn't come to stay. We sensed that. I would see her when were playing and roughhousing out there in the backyard. She would just stop and would peer intently off to the east. She did that a number of times. I always got a sinking feeling that she was looking to go.

It went along and she got over a lot of her problems. She put on a lot of weight. There were still a few ribs you could see, but she was doing much better. We were sitting around one night after dinner around the potbelly stove to keep warm. She was laying right by the fire.

All of a sudden, she got up and went over at end of the el that we were in and my little brother was there and the dog went to him and licked his face and nuzzled him. She turned from him and came to me and did the same thing. Then she went to my older brother, and then mother said, 'Dad, Dad, what is she doing?' *The dog was saying goodbye!*

Then she went to Dad and turned from him and went to the door and turned around. She didn't

bark. She had that intent look and was saying, 'I've got to go!'

As I say, she had really bonded with us. Yet, she knew she had to go. Dad got up and said he had to let her out. So, he did and she went out, down the steps and we all went out on the stoop and she turned around and looked at us again. She looked at each of us. She turned and went toward the driveway, not very far. She turned around again and looked at us again.

Then she went to the end of the driveway and I followed her out there. She turned one more time, just before darting off into the night. She looked at me for a while, then she looked and turned and headed down the road into the night at a very rapid dog trot.

She didn't want to go; she was torn between going—continuing her journey—and staying. She had what she needed there as a family. But she was so committed to that journey that she had set out on, however long before.

Every time I think of that, *I think of the commitment* that that dog had. You may say it was instinct. Dogs do have instinct, but I know for sure that they also have emotions and they can show those emotions. They can show love, great love.

In fact, they give us what we ought to give each other. They give us unconditional love! That is a wonderful trait, but Who created that in the dog? ***God the Creator!***

He created many things that a dog can do for man. That's why we call them 'our best friend.' However, God can put across what He wants of us, human beings that are going to be in His Family, to show us that in so many different ways.

The thing that I want to concentrate on is *the commitment* that the dog showed; *the refusal to give up!* Here she was going to have to leave, to separate from people that she loved. But the other goal came first.

Can you relate to that in your own life after God called you? *We were just living our lives!* A lot of us may have *believed in God, but we didn't know Him!* We didn't understand spiritual things, because we had not received that gift from God.

When God called us, what happened? *We had our lives turned upside down* like the dog must have had for her to want to get back to the people she was divided from.

We had to face that to one degree or another. Some faced it; some did not. After a little while they said, 'No, this isn't for me.'

We're still here, and a lot of you people out there listening, are still here! You're committed! ***If you're going to be committed, you have to first be convicted! I mean convicted deep inside!***

I know that *we are convicted*, because committed to a commission like that dog, ***to not give up!***

- Now what do we do?
- What did we do when we were called?

It took a different amount of time for each of us, but we then said:

Yes, I am committed to this way. I'm committed to what God has shown me. I cannot deny it, I can see it in the Word of God! I can see it, so I have no place to go.

At that point I knew it was going to change my lifestyle; I couldn't be out there hanging off a cliff on a mountain all the time. I had other things to do. ***But there was no question that I had to follow with what I has being taught, coming to learn and understand!***

So, we did that and that's why we're still here! We then knew we had to be baptized. I don't think a lot of us really understood that very well. We knew that's what the Church said, and we could see in that in Acts 2:38 when the people asked, 'What do we do?' when the Holy Spirit was given.

Peter said, 'Repent and be baptized.' We understood that! So, we were!

But more and more, especially now in what we face, we can understand so much more deeply the commitment that was involved in that covenant. It was a covenant of blood, as I put it, because it was ***a covenant unto death that we would be faithful to what we were shown by God through the Holy Spirit!***

We have that depth now that we didn't have back then, but that's all the more reason why now we must be committed! Very much so, that every day when we get on our knees before our Father in heaven, as we are commanded to do by Jesus Christ. When we just talk with God and go over things with God, then meditate on it at different times during the day.

The commitment is getting deeper as we approach the end of this crazy age! *And it is a crazy age!* But we really now realize what commitment is about!

I think of Paul; his example of commitment was so outstanding that you can still get tears in your eyes when you read some of the things that he wrote. I want to read one of them.

Paul suffered a guilt because of what he had done *before* he was called. He did it in all tenacity, but he didn't understand. When God called him—and that's why God called him—God knew that Paul was going to be able to do what He wanted him to do.

When Paul was called and began to go forward, look at the trials that that man went through. Have you read them recently?

2-Cor. 11; there are really only about three verse that really outline it, but:

- 5 times he was beaten and scourged by the Romans with a whip
- 40 stripes minus 1, that was their code
- 3 times beaten with rods

How would you like to be beaten with rods? If you think you've suffered, all you have to do is see what he went through.

- shipwrecked for a day and a half in the deep

None of us have gone through that. Even though our commitment is unto death—and I hope we fully realize that—we don't know if we're going to have to face that literally. ***But are we ready to face it?***

That's the thing! We have to determine now to be ready for when they come to our door, or whatever the situation, we won't have to think about it.

It will be like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They said, 'We do not have to answer you, we know what we must do. We are not going to bow down and worship your image.'

That's what we have to be ready to do ahead of time! Whatever comes up, we will be ready. God can spare us. I'm not saying he can't. He will spare some. He definitely will! But there's going to be a lot that He does not. There's a lot in the past—even in the first century—that weren't spared from what some of them went through.

It is a an amazing thing, but I do want to read a little bit here from:

2-Timothy 4:6: "For **I am now ready to be offered...**"

He was ready; he knew what was coming. I think he made that decision shortly after God struck him down blind on the road to Damascus. And because of the guilt that he felt at that time, he made his commitment then; probably that far back. After all that he went through, you bet he was ready!

"...and **the time of my departure is at hand.** I have fought a good fight..." (vs 6-7).

Was Paul bragging? *No!* He was speaking

from the heart because of the things that he had gone through and the things that he knew, that he preached diligently to the Corinthians and the others that he spoke to.

He had that passion in himself through the Holy Spirit. It was multiplied by the trials that he went through.

"...**I have finished the course...**" (v 7).

He was saying that he had stayed the course, because he knew his time had come. He stayed his course, just like the dog that came to our place.

"...**I have kept the faith. From this time forward, a crown of righteousness is laid up for me...**" (vs 7-8).

Again, he was simply stating a fact. He knew he had been faithful, that he was faithful because of his commitment.

"...which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day—**and not to me only, but also to all who love His appearing**" (v 8).

He brings us, and everybody else who has gone through that Scripture down through time and believe it and was convicted. He was including them.

He's saying that if you're convicted and committed enough, you, too, can be absolutely sure that you're going to be in the Kingdom of God.

Many times we wondered if the dog who had become our friend, a deep friend, if she achieved her goal. Of course, we don't know, but I know one thing: **she either did, or died trying! She was that committed, there was no turning back!**

That's what we, too, have to be; that our time will not be a sad story like maybe some you know. We've seen a lot of things over 40-50 years in the Church. We know that ***if we're committed***, we, too, ***will complete our journey because we're going to be so doing!***

Scriptural Reference: 2-Timothy 4:6-8

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Acts 2:38
- 2-Corinthians 11

RT:bo
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