

COMMITMENT VS. "GIVING IT A TRY"

Introduction

- A. Text: **Lk. 9:62**.
- B. Jim Ward tells of a couple who had celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary and were asked, "How do two people stay married for that long?" Their simple answer was: "You just *do* it."
- C. In big things and little, daily life often presents us with the need to make commitments and keep them.
 - 1. In these everyday affairs, we understand that "giving it a try" will not get the job done.
 - 2. We must actually do what we say we will do.
- D. Why is it when we obey the gospel — and God asks whether we intend to remain faithful to Him — we are able to say no more than, "Well, I'll give it a try"? Cf. **1 Tim. 6:12-14**.
- E. And why is it when we are living as Christians — and God desires for us to do something — we are able to say no more than, "Well, I'll give it a try"? Cf. **2 Tim. 1:6,7**.

I. "GIVING IT A TRY" LEAVES THE BACK DOOR OPEN TO EXCEPTIONS AND EXCUSES

- A. In many matters, it is the commitment that is the main ingredient in success — but we often defeat ourselves before we get started by cutting the heart out of our commitment.
- B. Despite the Lord's warning in **Lk. 9:62**, our "contract" with Him is often an open-ended arrangement that leaves us an "out" if doing the Lord's will turns out to be unexpectedly difficult or require sacrifice.
- C. We place numerous conditions, qualifications, and reservations in the "fine print" of our "commitment."
 - 1. We're preoccupied with "exceptions" and "extenuating circumstances."
 - 2. We're not willing to put all our eggs in one basket and make a serious promise of faithfulness and service to the Lord.
 - 3. We want to keep everything tentative, to put the Lord on probation, to "try" Christianity and "see if it will work out" before we make up our minds about it.
 - 4. We treat our relationship with the Lord as if it were some kind of experiment, a "trial run."
- D. We are endlessly inventive with our ifs, ands, and buts, our maybes, our yes buts.
 - 1. Like Moses, we have a number of what ifs - **Exo. 3:13; 4:1,10**.
 - 2. Are we not aware that the Lord is in control of all the "what ifs" that can come up? Cf. **Exo. 4:11!**
- E. Can we do no better than "take a crack at" Christianity? Do we intend to do no better than "try our hand" at the Lord's will?
- F. Our thinking seems to be: "We may as well have a go at it — the worst it can do is not work out."

II. COMMITMENT SIMPLY SAYS, "THIS IS THE WAY IT'S GOING TO BE"

- A. The Bible actually does not even use the words "try" and "attempt" in the sense of "giving it a try"! (Words like "endeavor" and "strive" describe the efforts of one who has made a serious commitment — one that is not overly concerned with "extenuating circumstances" - e.g. **Lk. 13:24; Phil. 1:27**.)
- B. We have been infected with a basic mentality that says — no matter what the problem — "This is hap-

pening TO me; there is nothing I can do about it."

1. We have accepted the philosophy that we are so helplessly at the mercy of *circumstances* that we are not capable of keeping our *commitments*.
 2. We view ourselves as *not responsible* for ourselves, our character, our actions, our habits.
- C. Consider how the story of David and Goliath would have been different if David had thought like we think. Suppose the best he could say was, "Well, I'll give it a try." Cf. **1 Sam. 17:32-37**.
- D. We need to be more "proactive" and not so "reactive" — we need to see ourselves more as "acting" and not so much as being "acted upon."
- E. Sometimes, a little *defiance* would help: "*Who's in charge here, anyway — my circumstances or me?*"
- F. Until we begin taking responsibility for ourselves and make definite commitments to the Lord, we will make little progress.
- G. *Results are usually in proportion to commitment.*
1. In our *personal evangelism*, for example, we fail more for lack of commitment than lack of method.
 2. In our *marriages*, we often fail to keep our commitments because what we made was not really a commitment, but only a "we'll give it a try" contract that virtually insured failure.
 3. In our *efforts at personal improvement*, we do not get any better results than we do because we make such watered-down commitments.
- H. We need to burn some bridges behind us, to burn some ships on the beach. A British mountain climber was asked how he managed to keep going higher and higher. He said, "Well, when you put yourself in a position where you can't go back down, you jolly well keep going up."
- I. What it comes down to is whether we *trust* the Lord enough to obey Him. Cf. **Jn. 2:23-25; 14:1**.
1. We don't deny the need for the humility which defers to the Lord's will - **Jas. 4:13-16**.
 2. Nor are we advocating a perfectionism that makes no allowance for mistakes.
 3. What we are encouraging is a commitment to the Lord and His will which is deep, unconditional, and not qualified by the possibility of so many exceptions that it is defeated before it gets started.
- J. Paul wrote that the Corinthian brethren were being expected to do as they had said they would - **2 Cor. 8:8,10,11; 9:1-5**. Cf. **9:8!**
- K. The commitment involved in discipleship is one reason it would be worse to turn back than never to have obeyed the gospel - **2 Pt. 2:21,22**.
- L. We need to "purpose" what we are going to do in the Lord's work - **2 Cor. 9:7,8**.

Conclusion

- A. A large chasm cannot be gotten over in a series of small jumps — we either get to the other side in one great leap, or we do not get there at all!
- B. The Nike advertisement says: *Just Do It!*
- C. Ultimately, we must "commit" ourselves to the Lord - **1 Pt. 4:19**.
- D. Having done that, we will be able to do more than "give it a try."
- E. "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back . . . *no turning back.*"