

# REMINDER

Volume XV

September 6, 2009

Number 36

# COMMITMENT

by Pastor Todd W. White

We live in a day of noncommittal. Apathy litters the landscape like paper on the side of the highways. Today, people think nothing of making a commitment and then breaking it a few months (or even days) later. We see this in couples who choose to "live" with each other instead of getting married. So many of the marriages that are entered into end in divorce. There are people who jump from job to job, never able to keep their commitment to an employer. On and on I could go, recounting the areas where we, as modern Americans, are so lacking in the area of commitment.

For years, I was bothered tremendously by the fact that there are people who come to church, make a profession of their faith in Christ - a commitment to Him - stay in the church for a while and then, for whatever reason, drop out, never to be seen again.

One would think that a person who had placed their faith and trust in Jesus our Lord to save his soul from hell would be so grateful that he would never even think of shirking his responsibility to Him and His Bride, the Church. I simply could not understand why anyone would knowingly, willingly choose to stop serving Jesus who gave His life for them. It really bothered me.

As a pastor, I used to rack my brain trying to figure out why people quit serving the Lord like they do. I was convinced that every time someone stopped serving God and/or left the church that it was my fault. I tried to figure out what I had done that caused them to "*fall out by the way*" (*Genesis 45:24*).

Somehow, I wanted to believe that I was the reason, and was, therefore, obligated to go bring them back into a right relationship with God and His church. I later discovered that, for the most part, this was Satan's attempt to appeal my pride. Of course, there will always be those people who quit serving God and/or leave the church and blame the pastor for it, even if it isn't his fault, but I have also learned that that is *their problem*.

Since I have discovered what I am about to share with you, the peace that God has given has been indescribable. God has taught me what to do when someone drops out of service to God and/or leaves the church. Instead of getting into a stir about it, I search my heart and ask the Lord for insight into anything I might have actually done to cause that person to behave as he has.

If the Father reveals something that I have actually done to offend them, I go and ask for forgiveness from that person in accordance with Matthew 5:23-24. If He doesn't show me anything that I need to do to make things right with that person, I make every effort necessary to contact him person and attempt to find out if I have offended him.

If there is substance to their complaint, we work it out, if possible. If there is no legitimate problem, I have learned to leave it there and stop worrying about it. In fact, I don't even pursue that individual from that point forward. Begging

*(continued inside)*

and pleading with him to come back and get right with God is, in most instances, a waste of time and energy that could be better spent in other endeavors.

But why would a person just up and quit like so many church members do? What really causes this? Well, let's see.

In Mark's Gospel, chapter four, we find the reason why people drop out of service to the Lord and/or church after only a few months or even years. There, in what is called "*The Parable of the Sower*" (actually, this ought to be called, "***The Parable of the Soils***" because the soils are what this parable is really all about), Jesus tells us what happens when people hear the Word of God.

There, Christ gives the reasons why people start out great serving the Lord and then, after a time, drop out. If you will follow along in your Bible as you read this, it will help make things clearer for you.

In Mark 4:1-20, Jesus talks about (1) *The Sower*; (2) *The Seed*; and (3) *Four Types of Soil*. The **Sower** is Jesus Christ Himself, Who sows the seed, which is the Word of God (Mark 4:14). In His explanation of the parable, Jesus mentions four types of soils. These soils represent four types of hearers of the Word of God. Let's look at them briefly. We see -

**1) THE UNRESPONSIVE HEARER.** This is the "wayside" hearer mentioned in verse 15. The Unresponsive Hearer is the person who, as soon as he hears or reads the Word of God, it is snatched away from him by Satan. The heart of the Unresponsive Hearer is so hardened that the Word falls on "deaf ears" and Satan is able to come and snatch it away as soon as it is sown (much as literal seed that falls on hard ground will be eaten up quickly by the birds).

**The Unresponsive Hearer** hears, but never hears. This is why Jesus so often admonishes us to have ears that really hear (Matt. 11:15; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8 & 14:35 - to name a few). This person has passed the point of receiving the Lord into his life, because he is so indifferent to the Word. Next, there is the -

**2) THE IMPULSIVE HEARER.** This person, as pictured by the "stony ground" in verses 16 and 17, is all too familiar. He starts out big - making certain that everyone notices him as he comes to Christ. He buys a big Bible, sits on the front row, and he talks and talks and talks. He talks about how wonderful God is, how he's going to invite everyone in town to come to church, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. But, it doesn't take long for him to begin to dry up, and soon, he's gone. He's dropped off of the vine. He lasted, "but for a time" (v. 17). Why? - Jesus said it was because the **IMPULSIVE HEARER** was never saved to begin with.

In life, the literal seed that falls on stony ground - ground that has a shallow layer of topsoil on top of the rocks - springs up quickly. But, because it does not develop a good root system, it grows rapidly, then dries up and withers away. This is what happens to the Impulsive Hearer: he hears the Word of God, he receives it with gladness, he starts out big, he blooms seemingly overnight, he talks a big talk, but he soon dries up and fades away. Like a literal plant, the professing Christian must have a

well-developed root system. Without it he is doomed to failure.

The believer's roots are his **INNER CONVICTIONS**. These inner convictions come from a disciplined, faithful walk with the Lord. It takes **TIME** to develop proper convictions. It takes **DILIGENCE** to grow in the Lord. Sadly, most people are too busy for that.

The **IMPULSIVE HEARER** talks big, but, when it comes to doing even the most basic things of the Christian life such as faithful church attendance, daily prayer, daily Bible reading, soulwinning, tithing, etc., he proves to be nothing but a big blowhard - all talk and no do.

Incidentally, there are three ways in which Satan corrupts our convictions as believers. I give them to you quickly.

Satan corrupts our convictions by -

**(1) COMPROMISE.** He gets us to run with the wrong crowd, to do things a believer has no business doing, to allow filthy habits in our lives, and so forth. He gets us to compromise in some small area of our life that eventually grows to be vast and unmanageable.

**(2) COMPARISON.** Satan corrupts our convictions by causing us to compare ourselves with other people. He convinces us that, when compared with others (especially other believers), we are superior in so many ways. The Bible says that we are never to compare ourselves with one another.

**II Corinthians 10:12** says "*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: BUT THEY MEASURING THEMSELVES BY THEMSELVES, AND COMPARING THEMSELVES AMONG THEMSELVES, ARE NOT WISE.*" Instead we are to compare ourselves to Jesus Christ, and adjust our lives according to Him, rather than justifying our own failures because they are not quite as hideous as someone else's. Jesus, you see, is our standard.

**(3) COMPLACENCY.** Becoming complacent - lazy - will definitely undermine your convictions. Recently, I have had three individuals tell me that they had decided to look for another church because they had too much to do each day, and didn't like coming to a church where reading the Bible and praying on a consistent, daily basis was emphasized. Laziness will corrupt your convictions, causing you to become numb spiritually. Soon, it doesn't matter to you that you're not walking with the Lord.

Complacency - **apathy** - is a clearly a trick of Satan to undermine our convictions and to get us to stop doing and living as we ought. It is one of - if not **THE** - biggest problems in the church today.

Then, there is the -

**3) THE PREOCCUPIED HEARER.** This hearer is pictured by the ground that is thorny (vs.18 & 19). Thorny ground is soil that is filled with roots and runners of thorns and weeds. The seed that is sown in thorny ground goes down, takes root, begins to grow, and then the thorns, growing faster, choke out the seed. The result? It dies out, never bearing the fruit it ought.

This is a picture of the **Preoccupied Hearer**. Now, there are great scholars, like Charles Haddon Spurgeon for example, who believe that all of these hearers are lost except the person represented by the “good ground” in verse 20. Perhaps they are right, but I don’t think so.

Personally, I believe the **Preoccupied Hearer** is saved, but his life is so cluttered that he has not bloomed and become what God wants him to be. I believe this primarily because of the implication found in the end of verse 19, which says, “***And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.***”

The word, “becometh” comes from a root word which means “to cause to be”, indicating that something that once was fruitful has had something happen to cause it to cease to be fruitful. In other words, I interpret this passage to mean that the person who is a Preoccupied Hearer started out good, but because his mind and heart are filled with other things, rather than the things of the Lord, he stopped being fruitful at some point.

Either way you look at it, there’s a message here. If the **Preoccupied Hearer** is truly saved, the message is “***Get Back On Track.***” If he is not, the message is “***Go All The Way With Jesus, Not Just Part Of The Way!***”

The **Preoccupied Hearer** has his priorities so out of line that he hasn’t got time for God and the things of God.

Our churches rolls are filled with **Preoccupied Hearers**. When asked to help in the work of the Lord, the say, “*Well, I used to . . .*” and they fill in the blank with all of the things they USED to do for God. Then, when asked why they don’t do something NOW, they reply, “*Well, I have so many things going; so many irons in the fire; I’m just so busy I don’t have time.*”

## ***BELOVED, IF YOU ARE TOO BUSY FOR GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD, YOU’RE TOO BUSY!***

The only thing worse than the **Preoccupied Hearer** who doesn’t have time to do anything for God is the one who **SAYS** he will work in the church, but stipulates what, when, where, and how he will serve. The true servant of God doesn’t care about the what’s, when’s, where’s, and how’s - he’s just interested in serving God anywhere He can be of use!

✓ What are the “thorns” listed in verse 16? They are defined in verse 19: “***And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.***”

Notice the thorns that distract and cause the **Preoccupied Hearer** to be choked in his spiritual growth.

1) **CARES** - constant anxiety about worldly affairs. The person who is burdened with the cares of this life, has too many irons in the fire, has no time for prayer and meditation on the Word, has no time to attend church when he ought, worries and frets about things, etc. - he is caught up in the cares of this life.

## ***WATCH THIS - GETTING CAUGHT UP IN THE CARES OF THIS LIFE WILL CHOKE YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH!***

2) **THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES** - Being so concerned with either getting money or getting MORE money that it strangles you spiritually. Some people are so caught up in this that it is unbelievable. In reality, neither money nor the things it can buy brings happiness.

3) **THE DESIRES OF “OTHER THINGS”**- anything else that we crave and desire that keeps us from growing in Jesus. Wrong desires are wrong because either (1) The thing desired is wrong in and of itself, or (2) The desire itself is wrong, while the object of the desire is not.

## ***IT IS SO EASY TO PACK YOUR LIFE WITH “OTHER THINGS” THAT THERE IS NO TIME LEFT FOR JESUS AND HIS CHURCH.***

Lastly, let’s look at the -

(4) **THE RESPONSIVE HEARER**. This person is spoken of in verse 20: “***And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.***” The **Responsive Hearer** has a heart that is not dry, it is not hard. Instead, it is *fertile and productive*. This person comes to church, hears the Word, reflects upon it, applies it to his life, and then bears fruit.

Please note: ***Though Christians don’t all bear fruit to the same degree, all true Christians do bear fruit.***

Why do people quit serving the Lord and/or leave the church? It is because of the type of hearer they are.

Those who are **Unresponsive** or **Impulsive Hearers** are actually lost. They may think they are saved, but they are not.

***“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (I John 2:19).***

**The Preoccupied Hearers** are really saved, but their lives are so cluttered with the things of this life that they, too, are useless to God. Eventually, being in a church that emphasizes the Word of God and the need for every believer to apply it to his daily life drives them away. This, then, is why people fall out by the way.

***May we all strive to be Responsive Hearers, so that the Word of God will fall on “good ground.”***

**NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK**

10:50 a.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Shirley White  
 Cradle Roll 2: Merri Geroux  
 6:00 p.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Kelsey Moreno  
 Cradle Roll 2: Andrea Hooper  
 Wed. Eve. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Shirley White  
 Cradle Roll 2: Merri Geroux

**AND THE PEOPLE CAME...**

*Week of August 30, 2009*

Sunday School ----- 21  
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 37  
 Sunday Evening Service ----- 34  
 Wed. Eve. Service, 09/02/09 ----- 28

**AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...**

*Week of August 30, 2009*

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 1,305.00  
 New Hymnals Fund ----- \$ 41.00  
 New Piano Fund ----- \$ 1.00  
 Parsonage Renovation Fund ----- \$ 6.00  
**Total Received for Week of 08/30/09: \$ 1,353.00**

**Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed  
 to operate the church  
 EACH WEEK,  
 as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00** 

**FUND DRIVE REPORTS**

**NEW HYMNAL FUND**

Offerings Received To Date: \$ 1,661.00

**NEW PIANO FUND**

Offerings Received To Date: \$ 575.00

**PARSONAGE RENOVATION FUND**

Total Received, To Date: \$ 454.00



Visit Us Online At - [www.southheightsbaptist.com](http://www.southheightsbaptist.com)

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED**

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*

**Please Remember To  
 Be Faithful to Give!**



As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go *up*. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithe (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start *today* - **OK?** Thank you.

**Church Directory**

Todd W. White ----- Pastor  
 Mickie Shatwell ----- Pianist  
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian  
 Larry Mathews, Caryn Quinnelly, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers  
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford,  
 Nathaniel & Rebekah White ----- Outreach  
 Flowers ----- Hannah and Shirley White