

## **CULTIVATING A HEART FOR CHRIST'S WORLD THROUGH COMMITMENT**

John 14:12-21

Do we love Christ? Our answer as Christians would naturally be, “Of course we love Christ! We go to church; we are in a Bible study; we read our Bibles and pray and occasionally tell people about Christ. What a stupid question, for it is obvious we love Christ!” Yet, the haunting question still comes back, “Do we really love Christ?” Do we love Him enough to make sacrifices for Him?

The Lord Jesus Christ gives His disciples a simple but accurate test as to whether they really love Him. He says, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** In this convicting statement, Christ does not deal so much with our external activities but our internal obedience to Him. Christ wants our hearts. Christ wants our wills. Christ wants our obedience, and He wants us to obey because we love Him and for no other reason. Christ is telling us that we must deal with our motivations. The issue is not only what we do but also why we do it. Christ says, “If you really love me (maybe you do and maybe you don’t), you will keep my commands.”

There are many commands Christ has laid down for us in the Bible, but the very last command that Christ left to the church was to preach the gospel to the whole world.

**He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mk. 16:15).** *This was the last command of our Lord Jesus to us and it must be our first concern.* World evangelism must be the priority of every Christian if he or she is to have the same heartbeat for the lost as did the Lord Jesus. We do not really love Christ unless we are deeply committed to spreading the gospel of Christ to every man, woman boy and girl on this earth. Do we have this passion? Are we concerned for the souls of others in our land and lands afar off?

The last command of Christ was to preach repentance to the whole world. **And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations (Lk. 24:47).** The last promise of Christ, however, was a commitment on Christ’s part to send the Holy Spirit who would enable Christians to spread the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).** Christ gave us what seems to be an impossible command but then gave us the Holy Spirit to supernaturally enable us to be His witnesses to this world. If we really love Christ, then we will have a burden to carry out the Great Commission.

## **GREATER WORKS**

**I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father (14:12).** In the context, Christ is not talking about greater miracles, for no one could do greater miracles than did Christ. Christ is referring to spiritual works, which come from the preaching of the gospel. Numerically the disciples of Christ would see more people saved under their ministries than did Christ. This is a reference to the salvation of souls and not to miracles.

**When the Lord left this earth, He probably did not have many more than 500 followers. Some think there were only 120. Yet after His resurrection and ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, there were 3000 saved in one day, and a few days later there were 5000 saved. Within 300 years, millions had trusted in the Savior and the Roman Empire was swarming with Christians. Since Pentecost, multiple billions have come to know the Savior, and Christianity has changed the course of human history. But did you realize that you too, if yielded to Christ, could do greater works than Christ ever did as far as reaching people for the Savior?**

### **DILIGENT PRAYER**

**And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it (14:13-14).** Again this context is all about winning men to Christ, and what Christ will do through disciples who are yielded to Christ. If believers are to see Christ use their lives, it must be through prayer. To have a heartbeat for a dying world, to desire to see people saved, to win people for Christ can only come through a life of diligent prayer. If we love Christ, we will find time for prayer, not only for ourselves but also for a world without Christ. We will also pray for those who are on the front lines as missionaries seeking to bring the gospel to a world shackled by sin and controlled by Satan.

When was the last time you prayed for a missionary? Do you know any missionaries personally? Beloved, without prayer we will never see the Lord work supernaturally for us and for others, and real evangelism and deep commitment to missions will only be a myth and fairy tale in our thinking.

**In 1970, Apollo 13 was launched toward the moon. At 10:58 p.m. (EST) on April 13, an explosion took place. And suddenly the routine was broken by a terse announcement from Jim Lovell: "Houston, we've got a problem." It quickly became apparent that the astronauts were in trouble. They were tumbling through space and the term "lost in space" was no longer a Buck Roger's myth. National resources were mobilized for the rescue attempt and from all over the world messages offering help poured in. When the astronauts finally got back, John Sigert was asked if he prayed. "I sure did," he replied, "and I believe the prayers of a lot of people around the world had a lot to do with bringing us back." The whole world became involved with three men lost in space and probably most Christians in this world prayed for them. Why is it we can get involved with three men lost in space and not with five billion people lost in sin? Why is it we can pray for three men about to perish in space and forget to pray for the billions who are perishing in sin?**

### **GROWING COMMITMENT**

**If you love Me, you will obey what I command (14:15).** Christians can only do greater works than Christ through prayer and keeping Christ's commands. What commands must He be referring to in this context? All the commands of scripture which directly or indirectly deal with the reaching of people for Christ. God has promised us *greater works* but this will come as Christians determine in their minds and wills to carry out the Great Commission. The spreading of the gospel is not just going to happen. It takes time, toil and tears. There must be planning and administration. Christians have to commit their own persons and pocketbooks to the task of winning people for Christ. God has ordained in His plan that Christians should carry out the task of world evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We Christians are responsible for getting the gospel to the Hottentot in Africa, the soldier in Russia, the doctor in Germany, the professor in Argentina, the farmer in China the politician in Canada. We are responsible for the whole world and that, my friend, is a big responsibility.

We carry out this responsibility by seeking to reach the lost world around us in \_\_\_\_\_, to pray for the lost in our country and the world, to give liberally of our finances to send missionaries to the four corners of the earth, and, of course, we can be ready to go if God calls us to leave this country to take the gospel to another country. Are we diligently seeking to win people to Christ in \_\_\_\_\_? Are we praying for the lost of the world to be saved? Are we sacrificially giving to see missionaries sent to other countries? Are we open to go to the mission field if God should call us? Have we honestly asked Christ to lead us into full-time Christian work? Are we hanging on to a materialistic way of life when Christ may want us to do “greater works?” Have you asked God to make you personally willing to go to the mission field if He desires to call you? Jesus said, **If you love Me, you will obey what I command you.**”

Why did Christ tell us to go into the entire world with the gospel ? Because all people are lost and headed for eternal judgment without Christ who alone gives salvation. All people are lost, abandoned, alone, gripped by the fear of death, in despair about the world of uncertainty, frustrated with their own inadequacies, bored with their meaningless lives, burdened with guilt because of sin, restless with their circumstances, afraid about the future and lonely to the nth degree. People may be mentally, physically and socially alive, alert, vigorous and in some cases outwardly successful but they are still dead spiritually and the end result is eternal banishment from the presence and fellowship of a just and holy God forever. Only Christ can deliver people from sin and hell. Men and women are lost and only Christ can find them, and only we Christians can take them the message of Christ.

Do you realize that during the time it takes me to preach this message (about 30 minutes) around 40,000 people in the world will die and pass into eternity without Christ?

**Many years ago, my family and I were driving back to Roanoke, Va. from California. We stopped at a Stuckeys somewhere in Colorado for gas. I told all the children not to leave the car. David (you know him as Army) who was six years old, was asleep in the very back of our station wagon and in a drowsy state did not hear the command. While I was getting gas and Carol was filling the water jug David got out of the car. A few minutes later, we got in the car and took off. My goal was to get back to Roanoke and this occupied all my attention. About 25 minutes down the road, Mark asked, "Where's David?" Carol said, "He's behind the third seat sleeping." Mark said, "No, he's not!" We suddenly realized that he was gone. We had abandoned him at the service station 30 miles back. David was lost. I panicked. My attention was not on my family, or the car, or the good time we were having or the desire to get back to Roanoke. All of my attention was focused on David who was lost. I could only think of finding David who was lost. I had only one prayer: "Lord, help us find David! Lord, please don't let David get hurt or kidnapped! Lord, help us rescue David!" There was a real urgency in my prayer. Yet, how often, I have asked myself, "Have I felt the same terrible urgency about men who are lost in sin from God? And is my prayer concentrated in this direction? Am I really focused on the lost?" (By the way, David was found, eating an ice cream cone and never the worse for the experience!)**

Let's look at this verse again, **If you love Me, you will obey what I command.**" The appeal is to our obedience as well as our feelings. As Christians, we know our feelings for Christ fluctuate (they go up and down like a yo-yo), but the way we show our love is by being obedient to Christ and His commands.

Sometimes we do not feel as though we love, but we must be obedient to Christ which is the acid test of love, since we are loving without feelings.

This also applies to our feelings for the lost. Sometimes we may get under the burden for the lost, even to the point of weeping. However, there are many times we do not feel as though we love the lost or are one bit concerned for them. No matter how we feel we must take them the gospel in obedience. Feelings are deceptive but true love for Christ is expressed by obedience, which involves a determined act of the will. Sometimes we do not feel like praying for missionaries, but we must pray if we love Christ. Sometimes it seems like giving money to missions does not make us feel any different but we must do it anyway if we love Christ.

**I once had a young man say to me, “Dr. Arnold, I will never again give by the faith-promise method to missions.” “Why?” I asked. He said, “I gave but this method of giving did not do anything for me personally. I was not involved with the giving.” I said to him, “We give to missions out of obedience and not to get some super feeling from the act of giving. It is not what you get out of giving that is important. What is important is what God gets out of it which is His joy of seeing your obedience to Him.” This young man’s problem was that he had feelings and obedience all mixed up. Furthermore, he could have been involved with many missionaries at our church but he was too lazy to take the time and effort to get involved.**

As Christians we must believe and obey God’s Word no matter what our emotions or feelings are telling us. God says people are either lost or saved depending on what they do with Christ in this life. God has ordained that we Christians should be the instruments through whom the gospel is to be preached and we are responsible to take the message to the ends of the earth.

Our burden for the world must come out of our desire to be obedient to Christ and then the feelings will come. The burden for the lost comes as we seek to be obedient. Our love for Christ grows as we seek to keep His commands.

**It was out of a sense of obedience to Christ that the Apostle Paul cried out, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!” or John Knox to pray, “Give me Scotland, Lord, or I die!: Or Henry Martyn when he landed in India to say, “Here let me burn out for God!” Or George Whitefield to cross the Atlantic thirteen times in a small ship to preach in the American colonies. Or Jim Elliot and his friends when they stained a river in Equador with their blood to reach an obscure Indian tribe. What these people did for Christ they did in obedience and they did not trust their feelings, although they did have feelings based on their obedience.**

### **REAL FELLOWSHIP**

**Whoever has my commands and obeys them he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him (14:21).** Here is one of the great promises of the Bible. If a Christian keeps the commands of Christ, out of pure love for Him, the Father and the Son will love the Christian in a very special way. The love of the Father and the Son comes flowing to the Christian who exercises obedience to God in his life.

If we want to experience God’s love in our lives, we must be obedient to the commands of Christ. It is no wonder that so many professing Christians are not experiencing the love of God, for they really do not want to be obedient. They are “playing games” with God. Is it not reasonable to conclude that the more we commit ourselves to world evangelism, the more we will experience the love of God the Father and God the Son?



As we enter into a greater degree of involvement for the reaching of a lost and dying world, the more we will experience the God of the plan and His love for us.

Notice carefully Christ also says, **“And will show myself to him.”** Christ promises that He will make Himself known spiritually to every person who chooses to obey Him. Obedience in the life produces reality of the person of Jesus Christ. Here is the formula or key to Christian experience. Those who keep the commands of Christ are those who enter into a special love relationship and fellowship with the Father and the Son, and it is these folks who will really experience Christ in their lives.

It is not logical to assume that if we commit ourselves to a deeper involvement with world missions, which was Christ’s last command, and make this our first concern, that we will enter into a deeper experience of God’s love and a deeper fellowship with God’s Son?

**Many Christian people, who have been taught wrong, have a deathly fear of being obedient to Christ. They fear that if they commit themselves to Christ some tragedy will happen or God will send them some place they do not want to go or their life will become one of misery. This is all a lie from the pit. When we are obedient to Christ, ‘God blesses us and brings us an abundant life. What we better fear is God’s discipline when we are not obedient to Christ. If your child came to you and said, “Dad and Mom, I have decided to be an obedient child and do whatever you tell me to do. Now, folks, I may fail at times but my real desire is to love you and be obedient.” What would be your reaction? Would you tell your child to shut up, snarl at him or her, take away all privileges, send the child off to isolation in a bedroom and make life as miserable as possible? Absolutely not! If that happened, you as parents would be stunned. Yet your reaction would be that of loving parents.**

**You would put your arms around your child and say, “We love you so much, and we are so impressed with this commitment that we are going to do everything within our conceivable power to make you a happy son or daughter. If that is true of us on a human level, how much more is it true for our Heavenly Father? How much more will God do for His children when they choose to be obedient?”**

We must never fear when we commit to and obey Christ, but we should fear if we do not commit to and obey Christ. God waits for those who will commit to Him. Will you make that commitment? Will you bring your heart into conformity to Christ’s heart for a lost and dying world?