

THREE GREAT PROMISES THAT REQUIRE COMMITMENT

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⁵¹I tell you the truth, If anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death. ⁵²The Jews said to him, Now we know that you are demon-possessed. Abraham died and [so did] the prophets. But you say, If anyone keep my word, he shall never experience death. ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died. Who do you claim to be? ⁵⁴Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is worthless; it is my Father who glorifies me—and you claim that he is your God. ⁵⁵Yet you have not known him; but I know him. If I should say, I do not know him, I would be like you, a liar. But I do know him, and I keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. ⁵⁷The Jews said to him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, Before Abraham was born, I am. ⁵⁹Then they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the temple. (Jn. 8:12, 31-36 51-59)

See the attached Appendix for the Complete Text of John 8:12-59

Introduction

A Christian lady named Ruth, testifies: Commitment was always something of an abstract term to me until I saw it demonstrated one day at an airport in Colombia, South America.

It was 9 a.m., but already the steam was rising from the parched red clay. As Ruth and her family drove through the gate that led to the terminal, they knew that this was no ordinary day at the Cucuta airport. Lines of green school buses clogged the parking area, and the entire town seemed to be moving en mass towards the terminal.

Ruth and her family threaded their way through the human barricade of green army fatigues, pushed past bayonets and billy clubs at rest, and asked, "Is there a plane for Miami?"

"El Presidente is coming," was the response. "No planes."

Bands played. People yelled. Banners fluttered. Everyone seemed caught up in the excitement, but not everyone was cordial.

“Dissidents,” Ruth was told, as she watched the angry mob outside the terminal, “they are angry about their poverty. They want El Presidente to know.”

Among the dissidents was a woman who gave a living demonstration of commitment: She held the restless crowd in her power by waving a red flag. Her dark eyes blazed and her long hair switched wildly as she oscillated back and forth like a fan on high speed.

By noon the sun poured down its 104-degree rays, and the air was motionless. Inside the terminal Ruth and her family drank ice-cold cokes. Outside, in the broiling noon day heat, stood the woman of commitment: no lunch break, no shade tree, sweat running down her face as she pounded the air with her fist, and her audience cheered. Seven hours of intensely animated demonstration in the broiling sun; seven hours of commitment.

As Ruth’s plane lifted off the steaming runway at 4 p.m. that afternoon, she thought about her own commitment to Christ: did it even begin to compare with the commitment she had seen demonstrated that day? (*POWER*, 5/15/83, p. 8)

Commitment is defined as devotion, dedication to a cause—for the Christian, it is devotion and dedication to Christ, and for the Christian, the power and ability comes from the Holy Spirit.

In the passage of Scripture presently before us, the Lord Jesus Christ makes three great promises—three promises that require commitment to Him if their blessings are to be experienced in our lives:

- *“Whoever follows me ... shall have the light of life”* (vs. 12)
- *“If you remain in my word ... you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free”* (vs. 31-32)
- *“If anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death”* (vs. 51)

If we commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we will experience the blessing of the promises He makes.

I. Commit Yourself to Jesus, and You shall have the Light of Life

Jesus declares, *“I am the light of the world; whoever follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (vs. 12.)

Consider the life of Jesus as He Himself defines it: *“The one who sent me is with me, he has not forsaken me; because I always do the things that are pleasing to him”* (Jn. 8:29.) Here is a life of fellowship and communion with God, based upon submission to God and obedience to His commandments.

Contrast the life of the Lord Jesus Christ with the life lived by the men of this world as their life is described in Ephesians 4:17-18,

... no longer walk like the Gentiles ... [they] walk in the futility of their thinking, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart.

They are described as walking (or, living) in the *“futility of their thinking.”* Their life is one of ultimate purposelessness and meaninglessness; they do not know from where they have come or where they are going, or why they are here—spiritually, they are walking in the dark.

Why is it that they are living in spiritual darkness? This is the case because they have become *“darkened in their understanding.”* The *“understanding”* is that part of the mind that governs sound thinking and reasoning; the Greek word, διάνοια, literally means, “to think through.” The men of this world have a mind that is functioning in the dark. By way of illustration: They are trying to put a puzzle together in the dark, a puzzle that would reveal to them the answers to the great questions of life.

Why is their understanding darkened? Such is the case because they are *“alienated from the life of God.”* The Greek verb, ἀπαλλοτριόω, means, “to have no connection with;” in this case meaning that the men of this world have no true communion and fellowship with the living God. In Ephesians 2:12 the Apostle Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians of their spiritual condition prior to their conversion to Christ: *“at that time [you were] separated from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world.”*

Why are they alienated from the life of God? The answer is, *“because of the ignorance (ἄγνοια) that exists in them”*—when it comes to knowing God, men are “agnostics;” literally, they are “without knowledge;” they do not know God personally and they do not know the way to God. This is the case *“because of the hardening (πάρωσις) of their heart”*—literally, men have “paralysis” of the heart; that is to say, they have a deep-seated enmity against God, *“the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so”* (Rom. 8:7), and rejection of God:

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised ... ²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind. (Rom. 1:25,28a)

Jesus promises that those who follow Him *“shall have the light of life.”* *“The light of life”* is the light that radiates from the life of God and directs us into that holy and blessed life; it is that for which the Psalmist prays: *“Oh send out your light and*

your truth; let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill, and to your tabernacles” (Psl. 43:3.)

If we commit ourselves to Jesus, we shall have the light of life—we shall be delivered out of the state of spiritual darkness and increasingly brought into an ever-deepening experience of the life and truth of God. In the Book of Proverbs this blessed truth is expressed in the following terms:

... the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until the full light of day. ¹⁹The way of the wicked is like darkness; they cannot see the things over which they stumble. (Prov. 4:18-19)

“The path of the righteous” is like starting a journey at sunrise and traveling into noon day brightness: the further you follow Jesus along the path of righteousness, the brighter the way becomes—the experience of God’s life and truth becomes deeper, more certain, and ever more glorious. *“The way of the wicked is like darkness.”* When you follow Christ it is like starting out with the first rays of the early morning sun and traveling into the brightness of noon day (vs. 18;) but when you travel the path of the wicked, (the way of the world), it is like journeying into the setting sun and into the ever deepening darkness of spiritual midnight (vs. 19.)

II. Commit Yourself to Jesus, and You shall Know the Truth that Makes You Free

Jesus speaks of the necessity of remaining in His Word; that is to say, the necessity of constantly and consistently making the Bible to be our spiritual compass whereby we are directed to the ways of God; our moral rudder whereby our life is steered by the law of God; our divine anchor whereby we are connected to Christ.

Jesus declares that as we remain in His Word we shall *“know the truth.”* As we remain in Christ’s Word we shall become acquainted with the truth of God; we will with ever-greater conviction affirm the testimony of Peter, when he declared, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have believed and know that you are the Holy One of God”* (Jn. 6:68-69.) Furthermore, we shall become united to the truth of God and transformed by it; this is what Jesus is teaching when He declares, *“While you have the light, believe in the Light so that you may become sons of light”* (Jn. 12:36a.)

Jesus further declares that the truth shall make us free. As we grow in the likeness of Christ, (by means of His Word and our believing, obedient response to His Word, at the same time we will be growing out of the bondage and corruption of sin. In verses 34-35 Jesus speaks of a terrible spiritual bondage: the bondage of sin. The sinner is a slave to sin (vs. 34.) The Apostle Paul elaborates on this condition when he writes to the Romans,

Do you not realize that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as servants, you are servants to the one whom you obey ... ? ... you [formerly] offered the parts of your body as servants to uncleanness and to ever greater depths of iniquity. (Rom. 6:16a, 19b)

As a spiritual slave, the sinner has no status: he has no claim upon God and no abiding place in God's household. The sinner has no security: he may be dismissed and consigned to the judgment of hell at any time (vs. 35.) If you are outside of Christ, still in your natural state of sin, you can be cast into hell at any time—you are in a very precarious position.

But Jesus has the authority to confer upon the sinner the new status of adoption and sonship (vs. 36.) At Calvary Jesus paid the price to purchase our deliverance from the bondage and consequence of sin and to secure for us a place in the household of God as sons. The moment you turn your life over to Jesus you undergo that change of status from slave to son, and there then begins that spiritual "reclamation project" of the Holy Spirit whereby He causes us to grow out of our former bondage to sin and into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

If this spiritual "reclamation" process is not taking place in your life there is no indication that there has been any transfer of your life to Christ. According to Romans 8:29, the purpose of redemption is that we might "*become conformed to the likeness of [God's] Son, so that he may be the firstborn among many brothers.*"

If we commit ourselves to Jesus, we shall know the truth that makes us free. We will increasingly enter into the life and truth of God, and become increasingly delivered from the bondage and corruption of sin.

III. Commit Yourself to Jesus, and You shall Never See Death

The one who keeps Christ's Word is the one who continues to live in a saving relationship with Christ. Such a relationship is based on Christ's Word, for it is through His Word, the Bible, that He reveals Himself and His will to us. This relationship is created by the grace of God: "*It is because of him [God the Father] that you are in Christ Jesus*" (1 Cor. 1:30.) Furthermore, this relationship is also sustained by the grace of God: "*he who began a good work in you will carry it out to completion until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil. 1:6.)

The person who keeps Christ's Word shall never see death. In biblical terms, death means being removed from a state of fellowship with God, a state in which one enjoys God's communion and blessing, and being removed to a state of separation from God, a state in which one experiences the righteous judgment of God enacted against sinful man. The ultimate expression of death is being denied entrance into heaven and being consigned to eternity in hell; it means hearing those awful words the Lord Jesus will pronounce against the unrepentant sinner on the day of judgment: "*Then he will say to those on his left,*

'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:41.)

If we commit ourselves to Jesus, we will never see death—on the contrary, we shall forever live in Jesus and He will bring us into the fullness of life in His Father's kingdom.

Conclusion

Commitment to Christ—what are the benefits to be derived from it? If you commit yourself to Jesus, you shall have the light of life; you shall know the truth that will make you free; and you shall never see death (spiritual death, separation from the blessed fellowship of God.)

Commitment to Christ—what exactly is it? By the grace of God, it is holding on to Jesus even in the rough times of life; it is seeking to daily live by His commandments in the everyday living of life; and it is putting your trust in Him day by day, and in the hour of trial.

Appendix: The Complete Text of John 8:12-59

8¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; whoever follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. ¹³ The Pharisees said to him, You are testifying about yourself; [therefore,] your testimony is not valid. ¹⁴ Jesus answered them, Even if I do testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid; because I know from where I have come and where I am going; but you do not know from where I have come, or where I am going. ¹⁵ You are judging by human standards; I am judging no one. ¹⁶ But if I were to pass judgment, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I stand with the Father who sent me. ¹⁷ In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me [also] testifies on my behalf. ¹⁹ Therefore they asked him, Where is your Father? Jesus answered, You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also. ²⁰ He spoke these words as he taught in the temple [courts] near the place where the offerings were deposited, and no one seized him; because his hour had not yet come.

²¹ Again he said to them, I am going away and you shall look for me, but you shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come. ²² The Jews therefore said, Will he kill himself, is that why he is saying, Where I am going you cannot come? ²³ [Jesus] said to them, You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not belong to this world. ²⁴ I told you that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am [he], you will die in your sins. ²⁵ Then they began asking him, Who are you? Jesus replied, What have I been telling you from the beginning? ²⁶ I [personally] have much to say in judgment against you; however, the one who sent me is true and the things that I heard from him are the things I speak to the world. ²⁷ They did not realize that he was referring to the Father. ²⁸ Then Jesus said, When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you shall know that I am [he] and [that] I have done nothing on my own,

but have spoken only what the Father has taught me. ²⁹The one who sent me is with me, he has not forsaken me; because I always do the things that are pleasing to him. ³⁰As he spoke these things, many believed in him.

³¹Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed him, If you remain in my word you will truly be my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. ³³They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never [to this day] been in slavery to anyone. How can you say, You will become free? ³⁴Jesus answered them, I tell you the truth, Every one who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵And the slave does not remain in the household forever; the son remains [in the household] forever. ³⁶If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know that you are Abraham's descendants; nevertheless, you are trying to kill me, because my word finds no place in you.

³⁸I am relating the things I have seen in [my] Father's presence; and you are doing the things you have heard from [your] father. ³⁹They responded by saying to him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham would not have done that. ⁴¹You are doing the things your father does. They said to him, We were not born out of wedlock; we have one Father, God [Himself]. ⁴²Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love me; because I came forth and have come from God. I have not come on my own initiative, he sent me. ⁴³Why do you not understand [me]? [It is] because you cannot receive my word. ⁴⁴You belong to [your] father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and is not established in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he is speaking in accordance with his own [nature], because he is a liar and the father of [lies]. ⁴⁵Because I am speaking the truth, you do not believe me.

⁴⁶Which one of you can convict me of sin? If I am speaking [the] truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷The one who belongs to God receives the words of God. The reason you do not [receive my words] is because you do not belong to God. ⁴⁸The Jews responded to him by saying, Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and are demon-possessed? ⁴⁹Jesus answered, I am not demon-possessed; on the contrary, I am honoring my Father, and you are dishonoring me. ⁵⁰But I am not seeking to glorify myself; there is one who seeks [it for me] and who judges.

⁵¹I tell you the truth, If anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death. ⁵²The Jews said to him, Now we know that you are demon-possessed. Abraham died and [so did] the prophets. But you say, If anyone keep my word, he shall never experience death. ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? [And] the prophets died. Who do you claim to be? ⁵⁴Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is worthless; it is my Father who glorifies me—and you claim that he is your God. ⁵⁵Yet you have not known him; but I know him. If I should say, I do not know him, I would be like you, a liar. But I do know him, and I keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. ⁵⁷The Jews said to him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, Before Abraham was born, I am. ⁵⁹Then they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the temple. (Jn. 8:12-59)