

Total Commitment

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of total commitment to Christ and understanding who Christ is, highlighting the centrality, basicity, and preeminence of Christ.

Duration: 32:32

Scripture: Colossians 1:15

Topics: "Commitment", "Christ's Sufficiency", "Total Commitment"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of total commitment to Jesus Christ, asserting that He must be central, basic, and preeminent in the life of every believer. Tozer explains that true commitment involves an intellectual understanding of Christ, a volitional choice to follow Him, and an exclusive attachment that rejects anything contrary to His teachings. He warns against the dangers of adding anything to Christ, insisting that He is sufficient on His own. The preacher calls for a deep, irrevocable commitment to Christ, likening it to a soldier's dedication in battle, where there is no turning back. Ultimately, Tozer encourages believers to embrace their identity in Christ and live out their faith with unwavering devotion.

Transcript

It is a privilege for me and an honor to address you. It is an honor that I know you and that I don't deserve, but who am I to argue with you aboard? You invited me, I accepted, and I'm here. Well, there's one very natural circumstance surrounding my little talk here this morning, and that is that I was assigned this talk, Forward with Christ, and I've shown a commitment, and if I had chosen it, that's the one I would have chosen.

So, when you get a sympathetic audience before me, you should have the pleasure of speaking on a topic chosen for you, but one that you would have himself had chosen. And then you should be able to deliver at least a passable sermon under those circumstances. If you couldn't, I assume you wouldn't call it a speech anyhow.

In fact, I'm here to say it already, aren't I, David? World or best, and I, well, can't keep it any time. I quit when it's time, whether I'm finished or not. Well, in the book of 1 Corinthians, the first chapter, it says, Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn, very perfect, for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, where they be thrown into a dimension of principalities and powers, all things were created by him and for him.

And he is before all things and by him all things can be. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

Then in Ephesians, first chapter, and concluding verses of the second, Paul says that God's power wrought in Christ when God raised his Son from the dead, set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, fulness of him that filleth all in all. And then, second chapter, We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints in the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the buildings, fitly framed together, grow unto one holy temple in the Lord, in whom we also are built together for inhabitation of God through the Spirit. Now, before we talk about our union with Christ and our conscious and volitional attachment to Christ in total commitment, we must look at who Christ is and what his relation is to the redeemed company, which we call a church.

In the passages which I have read to you, you will find this truth set forth, which I think I may imperfectly condense into three words. The words being centrality and basicity and preeminence. Now it says that Jesus Christ the Lord is central.

And the old writers used to say that Christ is to the church what the soul is to the body. You know what the soul is to the body. It is that which gives it life.

When the soul flees the body, there is nothing that can keep the body alive. When the soul is gone, the embalmer takes over. And in the church of Christ, any church anywhere of any denomination, whatever it may call itself, as long as Christ is there imparting life, being the life of that redeemed company, then you have a church.

For Christ is central in this church. He holds it together, and in him it adheres. And then there is the next word, basicity.

I never looked to find out whether that was your word. I made it, but if there isn't, there ought to be. And what I mean there is that it's basic.

Jesus Christ is basic to the church. He's underneath it. And the whole redeemed company rests down upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I know this sounds like a string of religious clichés, but I'd like to say it at least in such tone of voice that the cliché element will go out of it, and you'll hear it as though you're hearing it for the first time, that the whole church of God rests down upon the shoulders of his Son. I think we might be able to go around the world and simply cry, Christ is enough. Jesus Christ is enough.

What weakens us in the evangelical circles, and that's all I shall speak to, I never speak to the liberals on the general ground that it's not fair to shoot at a dead horse or kill a dead lion. So I don't bother the liberals, but when I'm among the evangelicals, I like to talk to them. And I think that our trouble is, what weakens us is, that we put a plus sign after Christ.

Christ plus something else. Remember, it's always the pluses that ruin our spiritual lives personally, and it's always the additions, or the additives as they say now, that weaken the church. Let's remember that

God has declared that Christ his Son is sufficient.

He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

He gathers up in himself all things, and in him all things consist, so that we do not want Jesus Christ plus something else, or Jesus Christ and something else, and we never want to put a comma after Christ, not Christ with a comma waiting for something else, or Christ with a dash leading to something else, but we must preach Christ, period, for Christ is enough, he's basic to the Church of Christ. Hear, O heaven, and give ear, for the Lord has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, and what he has said is, This is my beloved Son, hearing him, so the Lord Jesus Christ is enough. So I think that we of the evangelical faith, which is, I believe to be, and have long and always believed to be, the faith of our Father and the biblical faith, that we should not preach Christ plus science or Christ and philosophy or Christ plus psychology or Christ plus education or Christ plus civilization, but Christ alone and Christ enough.

These other things may have their place and fit in and be used, just as you can throw sand into a vat where they're making glass and it'll all melt up. So includes all these things, but we're not leaning on any of them, but we're resting down on him who is basic to the faith of our Fathers. And then there's that word preeminent, that he might be preeminent and have a place above all things.

So let's think of Jesus Christ above all things and underneath all things and outside of all things and inside of all things. He's above all things but not pushed up, as the old bishop said, and he's beneath all things but not pressed down and he's outside of all things but not excluded and inside but not confined. He's above all presiding and beneath all upholding and outside of all embracing and inside of all filling.

So we are committed to Jesus Christ, our Lord, alone. Now our relation to him is all that matters, really. And I want to talk a little about the true Christian faith as an attachment to the person of Christ.

An attachment to the person of Christ and total commitment to Jesus Christ includes this, or is this, there are four or five things I'll talk about if I have time to get through them, that the attachment of the individual person to Jesus Christ is an intellectual attachment, and I'll tell you what I mean by that, and a volitional attachment, and an exclusive attachment, and an inclusive attachment, and an irrevocable attachment. Let's look at the first one, that to follow Christ forward in complete commitment, in total commitment, means there's got to be an intellectual attachment to Christ. That is, we cannot run on our feelings or on the wisps of poetic notion about Christ.

There are a great many bogus Christs among us these days, and I believe that you and I, as followers of the Lamb, are not only ought to, but that it is obligatory upon us that we point out these bogus Christs and show them for what they are, and then point to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. You know that it was old John Owen that said to the Warren people in his day, the old Puritan, he said, we have an imaginary Christ, and I warn you, that if you're satisfied with an imaginary Christ, you must be satisfied with imaginary salvation. There are many Christs and many lords and many gods, but there is only one Christ, and the really saved man and the man who's following Christ has an attachment to Christ, that's an intellectual attachment, is that he knows who Christ is theologically.

For you know, there's the romantic Christ of the female novelist, and there's the sentimental Christ of the half-converted cowboy, and there's the philosophical Christ of the academic egghead, and there's the

cozy Christ of the effeminate poet, and the muscular Christ of the all-American halfback. Well, we have this kind of Christ, but there's only one kind of Christ, and God has said about him that he is his son, he's his son, and I like what they say about him in the creeds, that he is God of the substance of his father begotten before all ages, man of the substance of his mother, born in the world, perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting, equal to his father's touching his Godhead, less than his father's touching his manhood, who although he be God and man, yet he is not two but one Christ. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.

This is the Christ we adore, and we must have a knowledge of this, that is, we must have the Christ of Christian theology. I have been blamed or praised for being a mystic, I don't know what the word means, if to be a mystic you have to have dreams and all sorts of things, I never had one in my life, but I couldn't praise for something to eat. So I'm not that kind of mystic, but I'll tell you this, that I would never have anything to do with any book or any new movement or any religion or any new emphasis that doesn't begin with Christ, go out from Christ and return to Christ again.

The Christ of God, the Christ of the Bible, the Christ of Christian theology, the historic Christ of the scriptures, he is the one, so we must have an intellectual attachment to Christ. You can't simply let your heart run out to Christ as the Catholics let it run out to the Virgin Mary in a kind of a woozy, warm feeling about Christ, not being sure of who Christ is. This is the essence of heresy.

We must believe in the Christ of God, he must believe he's what God says he is. Well then I must go on, there's the volitional attachment to Christ, and what do I mean by that? I mean that if I'm going to follow Christ for incomplete and total commitment, I must do it by my will. The fellow's in a bad shape, and he's making a bad mistake, who tries to live on impulse and inspiration, who hopes to sail across the undulating sea of titillating feelings.

You can't do it, my brother, because the devil gets you down. The man who lives on his feelings is not living very well, and he's not going to be able to last very long. The old writers used to tell us of the dark night of the soul, that there's a place where the Christian goes through darkness, where there's heaviness there.

God isn't going to take us off to heaven all wrapped up in cellophane looking like we ought to be hanging on a Christmas tree. God is going to take us there after he has purged us and disciplined us and dragged us through the fire and has made us strong and has taught us that faith and feeling are not the same, though, thank God, faith brings feeling sometimes. You know, they used to say high heaven that heard my solemn vow, that vow renewed shall daily hear, but people are afraid of that now.

But I believe that just as Daniel, Daniel determined that he would not eat of the king's meat, and just as Jesus set his face like a flint, and just as Paul said, this one thing I do, I believe that the true follower of Christ must be a man whose will has been sanctified, not a will-less man. I never believed when we teach the deeper life that we say that God destroys our will. A will-less man would be like a man without a backbone.

He would be of no good in the world. You'd have to put him in traction to hold him up. And so if you have no will, no good, but the beautiful thing is that God unites our will with his will, and our will becomes strong in his will.

And sometimes as you go on in God, you hardly know whether it's your will or God's will that is working at a given moment. Well, now I go on to an exclusive attachment, and what do I mean by that? I mean that our attachment to the person of Christ must exclude all that is contrary to Christ. You see, there is a polarity in the Christian life, and this polarization begins at the very threshold.

These are the days when we're trying to be positive, one hundred percent positive. But the scripture says of Jesus that thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And that was said of the very whole of Christ himself, higher than the highest heavens and separate from sinners.

And if he had to hate in order to love, so do you and I. But they tell us that we ought to be positive. People write to me and say, you're negative. Why don't you go positive? Well, to be positive one hundred percent would be as futile and as useless, and thank God, as fatal, as to be to inhale steadily along all your life without exhaling.

You can't do that. The human body requires that you inhale to get oxygen and exhale to get rid of the poison. And so the Church of Christ has got to inhale and exhale.

When she inhales, she must exhale. And when the Church of Christ inhales the Holy Ghost, she must exhale everything that's contrary to him. Or maybe I've got that backwards.

I tell you, some of churches wonder why the Holy Ghost hasn't been around since last Christmas, and the reason is they haven't exhaled. They've not gotten rid of the old business that's in there. Well, I don't believe that any man can love until he's able to hate.

I don't think that any man can love God unless he hates the devil, and I don't think that he can love righteousness unless he hates sin. For the scriptures would leave us with the opinion, with the belief, that in order to accept, there are some things you've got to reject. In order to own, there are other things you've got to repudiate.

In order to affirm, there are things you've got to deny. In order to say yes, you've got to be able to say no. And the man who hasn't the courage or the intestinal fortitude to rear back on his hind legs and roar a thundering no, that some things can never say yes and make it mean anything.

I, for my part, have long ago come to the conclusion I can't get along with everybody. This idea that these soft-handed pastors with a saintly flush on their face trying to get along with everybody, put it wherever you put it, it won't do me any good. Because in an effort to please everybody, you'll succeed in pleasing nobody.

I've been asked to go on television a few times and to talk with priests and rabbis and all the rest. What do I want to do that for? I told them whose man had called me. I'm an evangelical preacher.

I preach Jesus Christ and him crucified and I couldn't think of a thing that I could say there. Can you imagine for me to get up with a bunch of fellows who hate my Lord and believe that he was not the Son of God at all? And that I sit there and do fancy footwork. Now, how can you do both? That I sit there and try to do fancy footwork trying to keep from offending somebody that hates my Lord and all.

I don't want to do that at all. If they don't want him, they don't want me. And if they don't want to hear him, they don't want to hear me.

I don't want a watered-down Christianity, bless God, but I want to be able to say no. I say no to the devil and no to Khrushchev and no to the Pope and no to everybody that has anything to say that's contrary to the Lord whom I adore and to whom I am attached with an intellectual attachment that's theological and with a volitional attachment that is final and with an exclusive attachment that would exclude everything that's contrary to my Lord Jesus. And then there's the inclusive attachment.

Now, what do I mean by that? Well, that's the inhaling, you see. That's all that Christ is and does and says and promises and commands and all the glories that circle around his head and all the offices he holds and all the shining beauty of the various facets of his infinite nature. All that he is and all that he has said and all that he has promised, I take that all.

I include that all. And then in addition to that, I include. I'm joined to him and identified with him so I accept his friends as my friends, his friends.

I love all the people of God. I've never been a good denomination. The president of the society in which I belong is president of a lot of the other bigwigs.

But I'd like to say this to you, brethren, that while I work faithfully along with all my brethren, I never was much of a denominationalist. I believe that God has his children everywhere and all God's children got wings and all God's children got a robe and so I love them all. And thanks to them all and some of them, listen.

But I accept God, Jesus Christ, friends. You know, the Lord has some odd friends, really. That fellow that goes down the street with a Jesus only button or Jesus saves button as big as a dinner plate here, you know, and his hair not combed too well, staring ahead, if he belongs to Jesus, I'm going to own him.

I remember one time on a streetcar, there was a good brother, he was a Pentecostal brother, and he was giving out tracts. And he was making a bit of a nuisance of himself, I admit, there in the middle of the streetcar, people were getting on and off, but you know, my heart warmed to him. And on my way out, I stopped and shook his hand and took a tract and I said, Brother, I'm on your side, I'm one of them too.

And I shook his hand and we had a nice little time there and I hustled off the car before it got away from my block. So I like to own all of them, you know. The old bishop said that the Lord has his treasure in earthen vessels and some vessels are a bit cracked.

You've got to be willing to own the friends of the Lord, whoever they are. His friends are my friends and his enemies are my enemies too. I've already talked a little about that.

And I think we ought to have the courage to have enemies. This togetherness that everybody's talking about now. Everybody sits down to know and has a togetherness orgy.

I can't go for it at all. I don't like it. I want to know, what do you stand for? Who do you love and what do you hate? And then after that, I may be able to get on with him.

Well, I accept the enemies of the Lord as my enemies and the ways of the Lord as my ways and the cross of Christ as my cross. That's crucifixion. And his life is my life and that's resurrection.

What is a good definition for a Christian? Well, a good definition for a Christian is somebody that's back from the dead. I think that Paul was one of the oddest and strangest and one of the most glorious of all the

Christians that have ever lived. And he gave us a little text there that no editor, any of you editors listening to me, you'd have thrown that out and shot that back in the first mail going in the direction of the fellow that wrote it.

I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Now, how do you get that way? I am crucified with Christ.

He's dead. Nevertheless, I live. He's alive.

Is he alive or is he dead? And the life that I now live, I live not of myself, but I live of the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. See, he's all contradicting himself there. And yet within all that contradiction, there is a synthesis of marvelous and glorious truth that a Christian is one who was crucified and is alive, being joined to Jesus Christ as he was joined, and humanity was joined to the deity in the hypostatic union forever, the eternal God joined to the nature of man, never to be reversed.

So all the members of the body of Christ joined to his body's share in some measure in that hypostatic union so that we're united with him. And when we died on the cross, we died on the cross. And when he rose from the dead, we rose from the dead.

And when he went to the right hand of God, we went to the right hand of God. If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above. And it's written that we'll sit in the heavenly places, which means that we are willing, members of his great mystic body.

Wonderful, I remember hearing a great Bible teacher years ago who's long gone to heaven, Mr. Tucker, Dr. Tucker. He talked about being under the circumstances, said some lady said, well, I'm feeling as good as I could be under the circumstances. And she said, he said, no, no Christian ever should be under circumstances.

He should be on top of them. Rise with God, Jesus Christ, and live again, and let his life be your life, and look down on circumstances. If you look out on them, you'll be confused.

And if you look down, you'll be terrified. And if you look up, you'll understand. But if you look down from heaven, then you will indeed be victorious.

You'll be on top of it all. Well, then there's the irrevocable attachment. What do I mean by that? I mean that the Lord doesn't want any experimenters about.

Some movie actors wrote a book one time called Try Jesus. I never read the book. I wouldn't be caught dead reading it.

Try Jesus, all this experimentation, I don't believe in it. I believe that we ought to be suicide bombers, that we ought to tie ourselves to the cockpit and dive on the deck, and if we go out, we go out. Sink or swim, live or die, irrevocably attached in love and faith and volition to Jesus Christ the Lord.

One of my boys, I had six boys. Five of them had the uniform on during the Second World War. One of them was a dive bomber in the Navy.

Engaged in seven battle engagements out in the Pacific as a dive bomber off of the old carrier, the Lunga Point, under Admiral Michener. We had heard there was such a thing as a suicide bomber, but I didn't know if it was true. But when he came home, he told me about it.

He said, yes, there were suicide bombers in the Japanese Navy. He said, one day we saw one coming out of the sun down on our deck, and we did desperately try to stop him, but he got through our flack and hit the deck and bounced and came to a stop, and the bomb was a dud, and so we got to see a live suicide bomber. And he said, well, we opened the cockpit and found a 15-year-old Japanese boy chained in the cockpit.

When he had gotten in that plane back with the air crew, they'd chained him in, he'd said goodbye. And now with a bomb in the nose of his plane, he'd dived on the Lunga Point. Fortunately for my boy and all the other boys, he didn't go off.

But they took a scared, shaking Japanese kid, 15, out of there. That's suicide bombing. And you know that Christians ought to be those who are so totally committed that it's final.

This, looking back over your shoulder to see if there isn't something better, I can't stand it. You know, a young man came to one old saint one time who taught the deeper life and the crucified life and said to him, Father, what is it mean to be crucified? And the old man thought a moment and said, well, to be crucified means three things. The man who is crucified is only facing one direction.

I like that. Said only facing one direction. If he hears anything behind him, he can't turn around to see what's going on.

He stopped looking back. He's looking straight ahead so that the crucified man on the cross is looking only one direction. That's the direction of God and Christ and the Holy Ghost and the direction of biblical revelation and the direction of world evangelization and the direction of the edifying of the church, the direction of sanctification and the direction of the spiritual life.

He only looks one direction. And the old man scratched his scraggly gray hair and said one thing more, son, about the man on the cross. He's not going back.

And I like that. The man on the cross is not going back. The fellow who's going out to die on the cross, he doesn't say to his wife, oh, goodbye, honey, I'll be in shortly after five.

He isn't coming back. When you go out to die on the cross, you give big goodbye to your friends. You kissed your friends goodbye.

You had it. And you're not going back. And we preach more of this and stop trying to make the Christian life so easy that where it's contemptible, we'd have more converts that would last.

Yet a man in who knows that he's a suicide bomber and if he joins Jesus Christ, he's finished, and that while he's going to come up and live anew, as far as this world's concerned, he's not going to go back. So the fellow who takes a cross on his shoulder is not coming back. And then the old man said another thing about the man on the cross, son.

He has no further plans of his own, and I like that. He had no further plans. Somebody else made his plans for him, and when they nailed him up there, all his plans disappeared.

On the way up to the hill, he didn't see a friend and say to him, well, Henry, next Saturday afternoon about three, I'll be by and we'll go fishing up by the lake. He wasn't going fishing up by the lake. He was finished.

He was going out to die, and he had no plans at all. Oh, we busy beaver Christians with all our plans. And now some of them, even though they're done in the name of the Lord and evangelist Christianity, they're carnal as goats.

And there are plans. There are plans. Met some gentlemen out in the hall, and one of them said about a certain book I'd written how what a blessing it had been.

And I said, yes, that's the only book I didn't try to write. Said I didn't try to write that one. The Lord blessed it all over the world.

But I tried to write quite a number that fell flat on their faces. So when you say it depends on who's making your plans for you, it's beautiful to say I'm crucified with Christ and know that Christ is making your plans. I tell you, gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, 20 minutes on your knees in silence before God will sometimes teach you more than you can learn out of books and teach you more than you can even learn in churches.

And the Lord will give you your plans and lay them before you. If the boards of the churches would only learn to spend more time with God than this time debating, you could save all those midnight board meetings where everybody leans back weary and on to the shades of ancient Greece on the wall behind where the hair of Titus Tonic got on the wall. And in the boardroom, get weary from discussing things.

I tell you, you can cut down your time in debating and discussing if you spend more time waiting on God. He'll give you the Holy Ghost and teach you and give you his plans. All right, now I think that's about all I want to say, that we are to be joined to Jesus Christ, intelligently joined by knowing who he is.

We are to be volitionally joined and not try to live on our feelings. So thank God there'll be a lot of feeling going along with it. And we're to be exclusively attached and exclude everything that's contrary to him and inclusively attached, taking in everything that he surrounds himself with and irrevocably attached.

So we're expendable and we're not going back. Well, may God bless us all. Now it's time to stop.

Fortunately, I ran out of material just as I ran out of time. And never think that the Lord will do.

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