

# Total Commitment

by J. Edwin Orr

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*Total commitment to God is the key to revival and living the Christian life victoriously.*

**Duration:** 28:51

**Scripture:** Romans 3:23, Romans 5:1, Romans 6:23, Romans 7:15, Romans 7:19, Romans 8:11, Romans 12:1

**Topics:** "Total Commitment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the subject of sin and its impact on humanity. He explains that both Gentiles and Jews are sinners, emphasizing that all people have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. The speaker then moves on to discuss the concept of justification, highlighting that through faith in Jesus Christ, believers can be justified and have peace with God. He also addresses the ongoing struggle with sin in the life of a believer, using Romans 7 to illustrate the internal conflict between wanting to do what is right but sometimes falling into sin. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of relying on God's grace and reckoning oneself dead to sin but alive to God.

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## Transcript

In the residue of the meeting, I want to deal with a lesson for us as praying people we learn from these great revivals. I spoke on Sunday night on the person of the Holy Spirit, who is the key to revival. Last night I spoke on the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit.

Tonight I want to talk about total commitment, because that's what this outpouring of the Holy Spirit brings through prayer. To me, the second most important verse in the Bible is Romans 12 and 1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your whole personality to God, which is your reasonable service. So I want to deal very briefly with that message from the epistle to the Romans.

Could anyone tell me, what does it mean to be justified? You have heard the word, I'm sure. Yes? That's right, that's as good as any, to be made right before God. I'm surprised you didn't say what most people say.

Justified means justified, never sinned. That's a pun, but I don't mind an occasional pun. I remember asking my Sunday school teacher in Ireland, who were the Sadducees? He said that the Sadducees were a Jewish sect who didn't believe in the resurrection of the body or the coming of the Lord, and that is why they were sad, you see.

I've never forgotten that. So if you like to remember, justified means when God looks at me, he sees me justified, never sinned. That will fascinate your mind.

It's more than forgiveness, of course. Twenty-five years ago I was driving along California Boulevard in Pasadena. I came to a stop sign at the corner of Allen Street.

Now there's a traffic light. I stopped, then I turned left to go north. There used to be a motorcycle policeman hiding under the pepper trees there, and as I drove north I noticed in the reflection of my mirror this motorcycle policeman coming rapidly in my direction.

I said to the Reverend Armand Guestwine, who was with me, who's he chasing? He looked back and he said, you're the only one on the street. The policeman pulled alongside and he said, pull over there. But I pulled over, he parked his cycle, then he walked back, laid his elbow on my window frame nonchalantly.

You will agree, traffic cops have poise. Now my automobile was a Plymouth at that time and it had an Illinois license plate on it. Mister, he said, do you have stop signs back in Illinois? I thought, what a dumb question.

Yes. Mister, he said, when you see a stop sign back in Illinois, do you stop? I said, yes. Then he said, why didn't you stop back there? I said, I did.

I mean, I think I did. I mean, I hope I did. I mean, did I? He said, you put your foot in the brake but you didn't stop rolling.

Show me your driver's license. Mercifully, it was issued in Chicago. He looked at it, handed it back.

Well, he said, I see you are a bona fide visitor to our fair state. We'll forgive you. I was forgiven, but I wasn't justified.

Do you know how I know? He followed me up to see what I'd do at San Pascual. I was on probation. Now, when God forgives us, he does more than that.

He justifies us. He treats us as if we'd never sinned in the first place. That's justification.

What does it do for us? Delivers us from the guilt of sin. It's very important. In New Guinea, one of my colleagues in the chaplaincy preached biblical sermons, but he assumed that every G.I. that came into the chapel was a Christian man.

So he just preached on the Christian life. He never told anyone how to become a Christian. We've got to preach justification before we can preach sanctification.

I asked Herbert Richardson, the late pastor of the Redondo Chapel, if Carroll Chessman, remember his name, was interested in the Christian life. He said Carroll Chessman was interested only in one thing, how to beat the rap. Yet you couldn't blame him.

I mean, if a man is sentenced to death, you don't give him a book on how to be a good citizen. He's most concerned about his guilt, first of all. But Carroll Chessman went the wrong way about it.

So we must be concerned about the guilt of sin. Now I'm going to mention another term, sanctification. I was preaching in College Avenue Baptist Church, San Diego.

Many years ago, my wife was in the meeting. When I announced I was going to speak on sanctification, one Baptist lady turned to another and said, sanctification? She said, that's a Methodist doctrine. I said, oh no, that's a New Testament doctrine.

What does it mean to be sanctified, anyone? To be set apart, that's right. Some people say to be made holy, that's also right, but to be made holy is exactly saying to be sanctified. Sanctified is the Latin form, to be made holy is the Anglo-Saxon form.

But it means to be set apart. Now some people think it means to be cleansed. That's secondary.

The primary meaning is to be set apart. Things have been sanctified as well as people. The house of the Lord was sanctified, the vessels in the house of the Lord were sanctified.

I remember many years ago, coming home late one evening, my wife didn't know when to expect me, so she had gone out shopping. I was too tired to cook for myself, too hungry to wait for my wife to come back. So I said to my eleven-year-old daughter, how would you like to make some supper for your daddy? She was pleased.

She had just learned to cook in junior high. Of course I knew what I would get, meatballs. But that seemed attractive enough.

I began to read the newspaper. My daughter put the pan on the stove, a knife on the table, a fork on the table, then she put a plate on the table. I said, take that plate away.

She said, what's wrong with that plate, daddy? I said, that's the cat's plate. I'm not going to eat off a cat's plate. But she said, I washed it.

I said, I don't care if you wash it a hundred times. That plate was sanctified onto the cat. That's the meaning of the word.

And the Bible speaks of it negatively, the children of Israel sanctified themselves to do evil. They set themselves out to do evil. But positively it means to be set apart for God.

What does sanctification do for us? It delivers us from the power of sin. I'm Irish. What are the Irish noted for? Two contradictory characteristics, good humor and bad temper.

And I had my share of both. I had a bad temper. I remember trying to commit suicide at the age of 11.

You may say that was very young. Yes, but mother had thrashed me. I thought they don't appreciate me around here.

I'll throw myself in the river. Then they won't treat me like that again. I could see the headlines in the local paper, boys body found in river, home difficulties.

I thought they'll be ashamed the way they've treated me. It's all over some trivial affair. Mother thrashed me for taking two pennies out of her purse and buying a box of matches and trying to set fire to two other boys.

I went down to the river to commit suicide, but the water was too cold. When I'm in the middle West, I tell them people jump off the Golden Gate Bridge to end it all. Nobody, but nobody ever commits suicide in

Duluth, Minnesota.

In July, the water there is 34 degrees. It discourages suicide. So the water was too cold and I didn't commit suicide, but I had a bad temper.

But I thought I was a Christian with a bad temper, just the way some Christians have arthritis. I didn't realize that God could deliver me of this. And that's what sanctification is all about.

Be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power. Now, how do we apply this? If you have your New Testament you want to follow, just turn briefly to the Epistle to the Romans. What's the subject of the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans? The first chapter tells us how terrible sin is in the sight of God.

Then the Apostle says all Gentiles are sinners. Then he says the Jews are sinners too, although they have the word of God. He sums it up in Romans 3.23. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

So now there you have the guilt of sin. Every last man born into this world faces the problem of the guilt of sin. What's the answer? Romans 4 and 5 deal with justification.

Romans 5 and 1, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice, by faith. I was preaching in Santa Clara for the Reverend Kenneth Longmore.

I wrote to him and I said if there are any schools or colleges around, arrange some meetings for students. When I got there he said you're speaking in a series at Santa Clara University. Santa Clara? I knew it wasn't a college of the University of California.

I said that's a Roman Catholic university. He said yes, Jesuit. They want me to speak? He said yes.

I said to the priest in charge, Father Sweeters I think was his name, do you want me to speak on our common heritage? Yes if you wish, he said, but we'd much rather you speak on faith and works, scripture and tradition. So I spoke on faith and works. I was asked from the floor, do you believe that faith without works is dead? I said yes, scripture says so, every version.

Then aren't we saved by two things, by faith and by works? I said not two things, just one thing. It says two things, by faith and by works. I said not by faith and by works.

It says faith without works is dead. It means the kind of faith that doesn't have works is no use. The Apostle James says can that kind of faith save you? They still didn't comprehend.

I said it means really we're saved by the faith that works. I said look my next door neighbor is a devout Irish Roman Catholic. My wife and I discovered they wanted to go to Mexico to a wedding, but they couldn't go because they had a very small baby.

So my wife said leave the baby with us, take the other children and go and enjoy yourselves. Oh no Mrs. Orr. My wife said but you think I couldn't take care of your child? Oh no it's not that, we wouldn't impose on you.

She said it's no imposition, leave the formula and leave the diapers and I'll take care of your baby. So we had a little squalling infant for a week. Now I said to my Roman friends you'd agree that was good works? Yes.

Well Mrs. Orr didn't do that because she thought what Christ had done on the cross was only 92 and a half percent effective and she had to make up with seven and a half percent good works of her own to get by. No no she believed what Christ did on the cross was a hundred percent effective. She just planned to do the good works to please the Lord.

So we are saved, we are justified by faith. What about works? Works follow faith. But now we come to another problem.

Romans six and one says what shall we say then shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. That's the King James Version. The Revised Standard Version, shall we continue in sin that grace may be greater? By no means.

In Philip's translation, shall we sin to our hearts content and so exploit the grace of God? What a ghostly thought. That's an Englishman's expression. I wondered what word could be translated God forbid by no means and what a ghostly thought.

I made a discovery. In the Aramaic, you know the word amen is not Greek, it's Aramaic. It means so let it be.

But it has a direct opposite chalila which means may it never be so. When Peter said to the Lord far be it from thee Lord he said chalila may it never be so. That's the word here.

Shall we keep on sinning that God may forgive us some more? Chalila. May it never be so. Yet we do that.

If I could illustrate, supposing Sears Roebuck put an announcement in the paper that on the first of September 1976 to commemorate the bicentennial celebrations, Sears Roebuck and company are prepared to forgive every outstanding debt against the firm. That would be very good news to some little widow whose husband had died and left her no money to pay the bills. But what do you think would happen between now and the first of September? Everyone and his brother Tom, Dick and Harry would go to Sam.

I mean Sam's U-Drive. He'd get a truck and he'd go to Sears Roebuck and order everything he could get. And he'd say charge it.

Why? Well if you're going to be forgiven you might as well run up an account. And that's what the apostle's saying. God's been so decent with us to forgive us freely, to justify us by faith.

What shall we say then? Shall we just keep on sinning that God can forgive us some more? By no means. Well what can we do about this? Romans 6 and 7 deal with the problem of the power of sin in the life of the believer. The continuing bad habits and attitudes.

Now I know some will disagree with me. I heard a minister in Melbourne in Australia preach an evangelistic address on Romans chapter 7. But I think you can see for yourself that Romans 7 applies to the believer. Take four selected verses.

Romans 7, 15. For that which I do I allow not. What does that mean? That's old-fashioned English.

How could you not allow what you do? Well actually the modern translation is better. I do not understand my own actions. I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Point number one. Point number two. I do not do the good I want, but the evil I don't want is what I end up doing.

Point number three. Yet in my heart of hearts, this is 7.19, I delight to do God's will. I'm anxious to please him.

Point number four. Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Four points. Here's a person who knows what's right but doesn't always do it.

He knows what's wrong but sometimes does it. Yet in his heart of hearts he wants to please God. And the struggle gets him down.

Is that a believer or an unbeliever? Well let's see. He knows what's right but he doesn't always do it. That could be either.

He knows what's wrong but sometimes does it. That could be either. But in his heart of hearts he's anxious to please God.

That's not the unbeliever. And the struggle doesn't get him down. The unbeliever takes his sin in the stride.

He takes the hangovers with the pleasures. Whereas the believer is miserable in sin. I'm going to ask another question.

Do you know anyone in Pasadena that these points describe? A person who knows what's right but doesn't always do it. Knows what's wrong but sometimes does it. Yet in his heart of hearts he wants to do God's will.

And the struggle gets him down. Do you know anyone like that? If so, would you raise your hands? Anyone? Who? I'm glad you're honest because I asked the question once in India at Coimbatore and the little woman jumped up and shouted, My husband! No, if the cap fits, wear it. This describes a believer in defeat under the law in the flesh.

And that's what these two chapters describe. Now when I say in the flesh, let's make clear what we mean. I was asked in an Anglican church in Sydney, do you mean the actual flesh? Well, I said, not the meat on our bones.

He persisted. I said, now the Greek word's the word sarx, but it means the carnal nature. But when he still said, but doesn't the Bible speak of sinful flesh? I said, look, if what you're saying is right, then a big fat man's a lot worse sinner than a little thin man.

And holiness is a matter of diet. Now there is a germ of truth there, of course, but it doesn't refer to that flesh. It refers to the carnal nature, the old man that we have.

It gives us a clue to the answer. Romans 6, 14. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

You're not under the law, you're under grace. What does that mean? The Lord Jesus said, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. That's why we talk of a man being a slave to lust, a slave to drink, a slave to drugs, a slave to profanity.

But this word says you don't need to be a slave. Why? You're not under law, you're under grace. What does that mean? The law doesn't help anyone.

I was preaching for Dr. Ironside in the Moody Church before 4,000 people, when three gangsters came in and stole the collection. Now if they had been apprehended, which they were not, could you imagine one of those young men saying, honest judge, I didn't know it was wrong to rob a church. Of course they knew the law.

But it doesn't help you. When it says 25 miles an hour, that's the law, but you can do faster than that if you want to. The law doesn't help you, it warns you.

But you're not under law, you're under grace. Unmerited favor in Jesus Christ, there's enough there to help you. And verse 11 says, reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God.

Next time you're tempted to sin, play possum. Reckon yourself dead. Next time you're invited to serve, look lively.

That's the discipline of the Christian life. You say yes, but I've tried this and it doesn't work. I agree with you.

You say then why did you tell us to try it? I didn't tell you to try it. I'm trying to mystify you at this point because I want you to get the lesson. It's not only difficult to live the Christian life, it's impossible.

Now I know there's a book called *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A Beckett, and there's another one called *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon, but there isn't anyone here who can imitate Christ or walk in his steps, because he was God in human form. Then why does God expect us to do it? Because he has provided the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, to do it in us. I have seen pilgrims in India lie on the ground, make a stretch with their fingernails, stand up, put their toes where their fingers were, lie down again, make another stretch, up and down, up and down, up and down, yard by yard, furlong by furlong, mile by mile, for a hundred miles, on their way to a Kumbh Mela.

You say what are you trying to do? They say I'm trying to save my soul. It's not only difficult to save your soul, it's impossible. Then why does God expect anyone to be saved? Because he provided a Savior.

In fact, you will not be saved until you realize that you cannot save yourself. If you think you can save yourself, you'll never be saved. Now in the same way, it's not only difficult to live the Christian life, it's impossible.

In fact, you won't live the Christian life victoriously until you realize you can't do it. But what's the answer? The Holy Spirit has been provided to live that life in you. So why doesn't he? Because he will not share you with the world and the flesh and the devil.

He will make every allowance for your weakness. He knows you. But he will not share you with the enemy.

You've got to be set apart for him, totally committed, fully surrendered. Sanctified is a scriptural word and I wish we could use it more. Trouble is to some people it's a party word.

The word sanctified means to be set apart, to be out and out. As Corrie Ten Boom used to say when she was preaching with me, 100%. She always said 100%.

That's what it means. It means you say, Lord, you can have all there is of me. The answer to the problem of the power of sin is found in chapters 8 and 12, making allowance for the Hebrew parenthesis.

In Romans 8 verse 11 I think it is, if the spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead really dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead is able to give vitality to your mortal bodies also. Ken Taylor, one of my good friends, has made the translation of the Living Bible. I've enjoyed reading it.

My wife and I read it devotionally often. But I don't like his translation here. He says if the spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead really dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will raise you up at the last day.

He makes a deal with the resurrection. It doesn't refer to the resurrection. The context doesn't refer to the resurrection.

Phillips translates it to the word vitality. If the Holy Spirit who can raise the dead really dwells in you, he can give you the life that you need, you say why doesn't he? He'll do it if you take Romans 12 and 1 as the proper application. I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.

Now there's a little difficulty here. Someone might say well isn't that bit by bit? No it's not. Romans 12 and 1 present is in the aorist infinitive in the Greek.

It's a point of action. The best translation I know is the C. B. Williams translation. It says make a decisive dedication.

It must be decisive. You say why couldn't I do it bit by bit? It wouldn't be full surrender. Suppose you had a bad temper, a critical tongue, a love of money.

You go up to a forest home and while they're singing I surrender all, you say Lord I'll surrender all. This year 76 I'll give up my bad temper. It gets me into nothing but trouble.

But I'll keep on criticizing everyone until 77 and I won't start tithing until 78. Is that full surrender? Could you imagine God convicting you of two things wrong in your life that you have to go and apologize for? You say Lord I'll put one right but not the other? Must be both, must be all. So in that sense it's entire sanctification.

Or as the scripture says sanctify you wholly. It says so. W H O L L Y. But in case some of you think that means you've reached a place of sinless perfection, no no.

The next verse says be not conformed to this world but rather be transformed. The verb there is in the continued tense. Be transformed again and again.

How? By the renewing of your mind. And the Greek word there is a cognate for repentance. Anytime you fall short you repent and go back to God again.

I think this is useful to say in a congregational church as in a Baptist or Presbyterian church. Our Methodist and Nazarene friends emphasize the critical aspect of sanctification. But I think that there's a danger in emphasizing shall we say the progressive only? It must be both.

You can't really grow in grace until you've made commitment. So I teach that a man must come to a place where he says Lord you're going to have all there is of me. And after that he grows in grace.

And this is what happens in all the great times of revival. It often affects a man's life for 40 years as it did D. L. Moody. So let me ask you, how does a poor lost sinner rise from the low level of sin to the high level of justification? By works or by faith? By faith.

What about works? Works follow faith. How then does a poor defeated Christian rise from the low level of carnality to the high level of spirituality? By works or by faith? It's by faith. What about the works? They follow the faith.

But the trouble with us evangelical Christians in so many places, we take our justification by faith and we try to take our sanctification by works. Every blessing from God is by faith. You exercise the same faith.

I never call it a second work of grace. I call it a deeper work of grace. It's all in Calvary, it's all in the blood of Christ, it's all in the sacrifice.

But we get it all by faith. Therefore I just want to ask you, why don't you make a total commitment, say Lord I won't hold back on anything. You can have all there is of me.

Good night, God bless you.

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