

# The Meaning of Being Committed to Jesus Christ

by Major Ian Thomas

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the true nature of commitment to Christ, and being committed to him for that to which he is committed in us.*

**Duration:** 43:32

**Scripture:** John 2:23

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ", "Commitment to Christ", "True Discipleship"

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## Description

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the profound meaning of being committed to Jesus Christ, urging Christians to evaluate the quality of their commitment. He contrasts the dedication of card-carrying communists with the often superficial commitment seen in the church, highlighting that true commitment to Christ requires aligning with His purposes. Thomas challenges believers to consider whether Christ can trust them as they claim to trust Him, stressing that commitment must be rooted in a relationship with Jesus that reflects His mission. He illustrates this through biblical examples, ultimately calling for a total and absolute commitment to Christ that allows Him to work through believers effectively.

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## Transcript

I'm very grateful to Mr. Bryson and Mr. Ramer for their kindly words of welcome, certainly a great joy for me to be back in Italy. I remember with great thankfulness to God the times of fellowship that we enjoyed together on that previous occasion, and it will certainly be wonderful to meet many of you again personally and to renew fellowship in our Lord Jesus Christ. As on the previous occasion, we shall seek, as God enables us, to examine spiritual principle, and to that end, it is essential that each night should, in a sense, be dependent on the preceding evenings, so that we may be exposed to the accumulative evidence of the Word of God.

And so I do urge, insofar as it is, humanly speaking, possible, for your presence each evening to come regularly, night by night, so that we may build up truth upon truth, precept upon precept, and come to understand something of the basic principles of divine action. I think most of you who took part in this series of meetings last year will appreciate that the purpose of this campaign, if you like to call it that, or convention or conference, is primarily that Christians themselves may enter into the fullness of God's purpose for their lives. It may well be that those who have not yet come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior will be present in the meetings, and we have supreme confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to

lead such to a saving knowledge of Christ.

But primarily the purpose of the meetings will be that each one of us, as Christians, may enter into that relationship to the Lord Jesus that will make it possible for him, through us, to reach out and bring blessing into the lives of others. That we may not only have our inheritance in Christ, but that Christ may have his full inheritance in us. Mr. Khrushchev, in his major policy speech a few days back, boasted of the fact that there were now some 40 million card-carrying communists in the countries of the world.

If the card-carrying communists were as committed to the Communist Party as the card-carrying Christians are committed to Christ, then there would be little cause for worry, and we could relax. But the tragic truth is that 40 million card-carrying communists know a dedication to the party policy which is almost unknown within the context of the Christian Church. The dedication of a card-carrying communist to the purposes for which the party exists are almost overwhelming.

And I believe if there's one thing that is of more paramount importance today than another, it is that those who profess to be Christians may come to an intelligent understanding of what they believe and enter into a relationship to Christ, the quality of which will far exceed the total dedication that is evidenced by so many who are completely committed to a political program. In the second chapter of John's Gospel, John chapter 2 and verse 23, now when the Lord Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. And on the face of it, we might be highly gratified at such a statement.

Perhaps if we had loved Jesus Christ in those days and been anxious to see him acclaimed and trusted by the mass of the people, we would have been highly excited at the apparent enthusiasm with which he was accepted as he entered the city. Many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. There was no question that there was wild enthusiasm, and the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to be in high fame with the multitudes on the street.

But the next verse tells us this, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and he needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. In other words, although it seemed that they were committed to Christ, Christ was not committed to them. And I'm going to ask you to give this your sober consideration tonight.

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover feast, many believed on his name after seeing his signs which he was doing. But Jesus, for his part, did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and he did not need that anyone should witness concerning man. He needed no evidence from anyone about man, for he himself knew what was in human nature.

He could read men's hearts. In other words, you may be committed to Christ in such a way that Christ is not committed to you. There is a quality of commitment that falls hopelessly short of God's standards.

And I believe that it is from this particular disease that the Church of Jesus Christ today is suffering, that we can become wildly enthusiastic about apparent response on the part of men and women, and boys and girls, to Jesus Christ, and yet tragically overlook the fact that the quality of their commitment to Christ is not such that Christ can be committed to them. I wonder what the quality of your commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is. You see, it's one thing for you and for me to say, I trust Christ.

But the more important question is this. Does Christ trust me? It's one thing to persuade other people that I'm committed to him, and it's comparatively easy to give that impression. But the salient question is this.

Is Christ committed to you? In other words, what will be the valid acid test of your commitment to Christ? The only valid test of your commitment to Christ is whether Christ is committed to you. Of what possible value can it be that you and I are credited with committal to Christ if Christ is not committed to us? And I trust that during the course of these days that we spend together, we may come to understand rather more fully what is involved in that quality of committal to Jesus Christ that will merit his committal to you and to me. What is committal to Christ? Why was it that the committal of these people to the Lord Jesus did not merit his committal to them, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them? In spite of all their enthusiasm and in spite of all their excitement and apparent loyalty and apparent dedication and apparent faith, he remained totally unmoved, unimpressed.

And I'm afraid that in the face of much of what we call our enthusiasm for Jesus Christ, God remains unimpressed. In spite of what we may, alas, all too often elicit as a response to Jesus Christ, God remains unimpressed. Because by and large, the quality of our commitment is such that it is quite impossible for God on that basis to commit himself to us.

It was certainly in this particular instance, although it declares that many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did, it wasn't very long before the same people were crying crucified and stood milling around the cross upon which he was named. That is why Jesus Christ did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men. What was the basic error in their commitment? Well, it's simply this.

They were not committed to Christ for that to which Christ was committed in them. In order that we may understand the true nature of committal, we need, as in every other instance, to turn to the Lord Jesus himself. The Lord Jesus Christ is the final exegesis, exposition of all truth about God, about man, and about man's relationship to God.

And it is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that we discover, personified and demonstrated in action, the nature of true committal. These men and women, for all their excitement on the street, were committed to Christ for the entertainment they were enjoying when they saw the miracles, they were there. But the disciples were also apparently committed to Jesus Christ.

And yet at this stage of their committal to the Lord Jesus Christ, he wasn't committed to them. Because for the same reason, they were not committed to him for that to which he was committed in them. If you glance with me at the 16th chapter of Matthew, with which I'm sure you'll be familiar, Matthew chapter 16 and verse 13.

When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee but my Father which is in heaven.

One might imagine that this was a committal. Whom say ye that I, the Son of Man, am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter as the spokesman committed himself, and by their consent he committed to the other disciples, to the person of Jesus Christ as God's Son.

Was their quality of commitment to Jesus as the Son of God and as the Christ of God such that Christ could commit himself to them? One might imagine they were now highly qualified to become his emissaries to the uttermost ends of the earth, to publish the good tidings that the Messiah had arrived, God's promised Savior. But verse 20 tells us this, Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. No sooner had they acclaimed him to be God's Son and the Christ of God, the promised Messiah, than the Lord Jesus placed a total prohibition upon them and forbade them to tell anybody that he was Jesus the Christ.

Because although they professed to trust him, he didn't trust them. Why didn't he trust them? Because they were not committed to Christ for that to which Christ was committed. Verse 21, From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day.

And he gave to his disciples a preview of the messianic mission to which he was committed. The purpose for which he was born was to live and die and rise again from the dead. That as God's incarnate Son he was to accomplish the redemption of a fallen humanity by the sacrifice of himself.

To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, to lay down my life a ransom for many. He gave them a preview of that program that was to be implemented by his total obedience to the Father. Verse 22, Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.

This can't happen to you. And immediately, having once acclaimed the Lord Jesus to be God's Son and the Christ, he repudiated the purpose for which God had sent his Son to be the Christ. He professed to be committed to Christ but he was not committed to that to which Christ was committed.

So Christ was not committed to him. Therefore, if I want to know the quality of your commitment to Jesus Christ and if I want to know the quality of my commitment to Jesus Christ, the question that needs to be answered is this. Are you committed to Jesus Christ for that to which Christ is committed in you? Am I tonight committed to Jesus Christ for that to which Jesus Christ is committed in me? Because however enthusiastic I may be, however sentimental my affection and love or loyalty, Christ will not be committed to me.

If I am not committed to him for that to which he is committed in me, he will repudiate my commitment. They didn't want the cross. They refused to have the cross.

What kind of a Christ then was it to which they were committed? A Christ without a cross. The Lord Jesus turned and said to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offense unto me. Thou savest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

And looking through his sincerity, looking through his loyalty, looking through his affection, looking through his enthusiasm as an ardent devotee of Jesus, the Son of God, God's Christ, the Lord Jesus looking through all that, he looked straight into the face of the devil himself. And the man whose lips at one moment had been the mouthpiece of the Father in heaven, were the next moment the mouthpiece of the devil, the archenemy of God. Any challenge to Peter's sincerity? None.

Any doubt cast upon his personal affection to Jesus Christ? None whatever. Had he not forsaken all things to follow him? Yes, he had indeed. And yet in spite of his loyalty, sincerity, willingness for sacrifice, his

committal to Christ was not such as would allow Christ to commit himself to him.

You see, the disciples at this stage had a completely false concept of the purpose for which the Lord Jesus Christ had come to the world. They imagined that the Lord Jesus Christ would be committed as the Christ to the emancipation of the Jews from the Roman yoke, that they would once more be raised up to be a mighty influential nation in the world. They imagined that Jesus Christ was committed to their own immediate, contemporary, parochial needs, aches and pains, that the Lord Jesus Christ had to repudiate their false concept of his messianic mission.

In so many words he would have to say to them, I'm not committed to you. I'm not even committed to your generation. I'm not committed to your nation.

I'm not committed to your political situation. I am committed only to my Father and I'm committed only to that to which my Father is committed in me. And in my commitment to my Father and to all that to which my Father is committed in me, I am committed to all men in all time and every generation, all that precede and all that succeed this generation.

This was the nature of Christ's commitment. He was committed to the Father. Jesus Christ as the Redeemer was not committed to the salvation of sinners.

He was not committed to any need. He was not committed to any particular period in the history of man. He was not committed to any local situation.

The Lord Jesus Christ in his perfect, sinless, utter humanity was committed only to his Father and to all that to which his Father was committed in him. And this involved for the Lord Jesus Christ a constant, unrelenting attitude of total availability to his Father that found itself expressed in total, complete, and unrelenting obedience. But in this confidence that the Father to whom he was committed, for all that to which the Father was committed in him, he, the Father, was totally competent to fulfill that to which he was committed.

Now, I want to say that again because this is vital. The Lord Jesus Christ was committed to the Father only, exclusively, and to all that to which the Father was committed in the Son. In the supreme confidence that the Father was completely competent to implement that to which he in the Son was committed.

And the Lord Jesus Christ said, as my Father sent me, so send I you. And this is to be the quality of our commitment to the Lord Jesus. I am committed to the Lord Jesus and to all that to which the Lord Jesus Christ is committed in me.

In the supreme confidence that Christ in me is totally competent for all that to which he in me is committed. If once we came to this position, there would be no other basic issue to face, none. This is total and absolute commitment.

The moment we're committed to the Lord Jesus Christ on this basis, no further issues have to be faced, simply decisions of direction. And there can be no substitute for this quality of commitment. Satan is very subtle, for he will persuade us to be committed to everything and every body other than Christ for that to which Christ is committed in us.

He'll commit us to needs. He can even persuade you to be committed to the will of God in such a way that you're not committed to God. Did you know that? The devil can persuade you to be so committed to the

will of God that you will frustrate all the purposes of God in your committal to God's will.

Can you think of an illustration? God said to Abraham, in thy seed shall all the famines of the earth be blessed. And God promised to Abraham a son. Of this son there was to be begotten a race, of which race there would be born to the world the Christ, the Messiah.

So what was the will of God for Abraham? A son. So Abraham immediately committed himself to the will of God, dedicated himself wholly, completely to the will of God. The will of God for me is that I shall have a son.

At all costs, for God's sake, I must have a son. But humanly speaking, a son was impossible. He was an old man, and Sarah, his wife, an old woman who was barren, who was never born.

But in his fervent dedication to the will of God, Abraham determined at all costs, for God's sake, he must have a son. And so he gets into committee with Sarah, and in the name of God's will, to which they are now totally committed, they agree that Hagar, the bondwoman, should be brought into the home, and that of this woman, Abraham, should bear a son. And then God would be presented with a little boy in fulfillment of God's will, and Ishmael was born.

Ishmael was the by-product of a man's total dedication to the will of God that repudiated all God's purposes in Isaac, the promised seed. And for 15 solid years, Abraham tried to make Ishmael a blessing, who had been born out of a false dedication. Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, and the only reason today that Palestine is surrounded by hostile, arid nations, a 20th century flashpoint in human history, is that Abraham was dedicated to the will of God, and not to God himself.

Fifteen years later, according to God's program, Isaac was born. Then God said to Abraham, take him up the hill and slay him. For God wanted Abraham to learn his lesson.

You are to be committed to me and to all that to which I am committed in you. You are not committed to my will, you are committed to me. Because if you are committed to my will and not committed to me, you will interpret my will your way, and you will try to implement my will man's way.

But when you are committed to me and all that to which I am committed in you, I interpret my will my way, and I implement my will my way. Now take Abraham and slay him, lest you be committed to the blessing itself, and not the blesser. And Abraham had learned his lesson, and he went up the hill with Isaac, and as the knife flashed in the sun, and Abraham in his heart was saying, God, I don't understand this.

If I kill this Isaac, I don't see how your promise can be fulfilled, but I've learned my lesson. I am to be committed to you and to all that to which you're committed in me, and if you tell me to kill him, I'll slay him and God take the consequence. And at that point God said, thank you Abraham, that's all I want to know.

Now throw the knife away. Now I know that you're committed to me and to all that to which I'm committed in you, in the supreme confidence that I am competent to implement that to which I am committed. And at that moment Abraham became the friend of God, for he had learned the first principle of a living faith.

I need hardly remind you of the occasion when Moses was committed to a need. We've discussed this, some of us, together before. Over 400 years before he was born, God had conferred with Abraham about the ultimate destiny of this people that should be born of Isaac, and whom the seed should come into the world.

He had told Abraham 400 years before that they would come under a hostile Pharaoh, but God had said, I will raise up a deliverer for them. And it was God that preserved Moses in the bulrushes. Because it was God that gave him that magnificent education so that he was mighty in word and deed and all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

And at 40 years of age, Moses committed himself to a need, but not to God. Wasn't it God's plan that Moses should deliver Israel? Yes, indeed it was, but you see Moses looked this way and Moses looked that way, but he didn't look God's way, and he went out to become a murderer and not a missionary. Because he was committed to a need, a task, and then he fled for 40 years, useless to God or man, the backside of the desert.

You and I are not committed to needs, movements, men, or missions. We are committed to Jesus Christ, with no strings attached, and to all that to which Jesus Christ is committed in us. In the supreme confidence that he is competent to implement that to which he is committed.

I wonder if you appreciate how basic this is. Supposing you come to this place as a Christian, and I were to come up to you and say, are you prepared to go to the mission field, you'd say, don't ask a silly question. I am committed to Jesus Christ, and to all that to which Jesus Christ is committed in me.

If the Lord Jesus Christ happens to be committed in me to go to the Amazon, or Borneo, or anywhere else in the world, I am committed to Jesus Christ, and to all that to which Jesus Christ is committed in me. Why ask me whether I'm prepared to go as a missionary? Your question has become totally superfluous. This issue has already been faced, of course.

That's why if you came to the place where Jesus Christ is given right of way in your life, totally, utterly, once and finally, and for all, it would be completely unnecessary from any time on to ask whether you're prepared to go to the mission field. Would you see this quality of commitment is hard to know. That's why out of every 100 young men and women who stand offering themselves for the mission field, not more than three ever get to the mission field, and 50% of those three come back after the first term, never to return to the field.

And yet I've seen people come away from a missionary convention where two or three hundred people have stood, wildly enthusiastic, and they said, wasn't that a tremendous meeting? Do you see all those young men and women standing on their feet, willing to go to the mission field? Three hundred of them! What did it represent? Three hundred men standing on their feet, prepared to go to the mission field, meant nine who would get there, of whom four or five would return, back home, never to go back. Do you think God's unduly impressed? Of course he isn't. It's a pantomime.

That's just a pantomime. But men and women, it is upon this basis that we have been deceiving ourselves for decades, while 40 million card-carrying communists are totally committed. In life or death, we're satisfied to put on a show.

When the show's over, everybody goes away congratulating themselves. But in the final analysis, the spiritual consequence is almost negligible, because we have learned to deceive ourselves by outward expressions of devotion, without any corresponding inward spiritual abandonment to the totalitarian sovereignty of Jesus Christ. If you're committed to Jesus Christ and to all that which Jesus Christ has committed in you, and I say to you, would you be prepared to invest all the money you have in the service of Jesus Christ? You would respond in exactly the same way, you'd say, don't be so stupid.

Why ask me unnecessary questions? I am committed to Jesus Christ and to all that to which Jesus Christ has committed in me. If Jesus Christ, who lives within me, is committed to spending every penny I ever had, or every penny I ever will have, that issue has already been faced. There is no further decision to be made.

Have you come to this place in your Christian life? Quite frankly, are there any issues still to be faced in your Christian life? Or has the issue been fairly and finally and squarely faced? If not, your commitment to Christ is not such that Christ can be committed to you. Because this is the only standard that meets with God's approval and satisfies his basic minimum requirements. And we're going to go on throughout these days that we spend together, examining the spiritual issues that are involved, the spiritual principle that is involved.

That really is what is truth. Truth isn't a creed, truth isn't a dogma, truth isn't a philosophy or a theology. Truth is basic principle.

Truth is unalterable. Truth never changes. Truth is applicable to every situation and every changing time factor.

The truth about our relationship to Jesus Christ won't change in five years' time or ten years' time. There's only one basic principle upon which God operates, whether it's in the Old Testament or the New Testament. And it is of imperative importance that you and I should discover the principles of divine action.

And I'm going to invite you to join with me throughout these days as we explore together, recognizing that the Holy Spirit alone is the one who takes the things that are Christ's and reveals them unto us, who alone can bring us to this place of total commitment that makes our whole humanity available to God, so that body, soul, and spirit, mind, emotion, and will go, as it were, once more into orbit around the person of Jesus Christ, our whole lives reorienting, until it is possible for Jesus Christ alone to behave in terms of our humanity. And that, ultimately, is what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is Christ behaving, clothed with the humanity of a forgiven sin.

May God give us an understanding of these things and lead us into that place in our relationship to Jesus Christ that gives him absolute right of way. And then very wonderful things will happen, for the world will witness not what we can do for Christ, but what Christ can do through us. And this is what the world is waiting for.

For the world is rather tired of witnessing men trying to be man-sized for God. God is waiting for the opportunity to be God-sized in man. That is what is involved in total commitment.

Now let's just bow our heads in prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank thee for thy complete and absolute availability to the Father. We thank thee that thou wast a beating unto death, even the death of the cross.

Thou didst turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, setting thy face like a flame. Totally committed to the Father, to all that to which the Father was committed in thee, and in the supreme confidence that the Father was confident. How we thank that thou hast given to us the same privilege in this our day and generation, in the wicked, dangerous days in which we live, that our bodies might become a habitation of God through the Spirit, filled and flooded with God himself, so that we may become wholly available for thee to behave and act in us and through us.

Bring us to the place where there's no further issue to be met, because we have yielded completely. O God, we believe that nothing less than this can ever satisfy thy demands upon us, and thou wilt. We ask it for thy name's sake.

Amen.

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