

Commitment

by Peter Maiden

Jesus Christ has absolute authority over the world, the church, and our lives, and we must surrender to His will and trust in His power to guide and direct us.

Duration: 50:20

Scripture: Luke 14:25

Topics: "Commitment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker, Charles Marsh, discusses the book 'Love Covers' by George Verwer, which he describes as a message to a divided church and a guide for Christian unity. He then reads from Luke's Gospel, specifically chapter 14, verses 25 to 33, emphasizing the viewpoint of Jesus as the one holding the world together. Marsh assures the audience that despite the chaos and challenges they may face, Jesus has control over their lives and will never let go. He concludes by encouraging the audience to reflect on what God has been saying to them and to take action in response, offering the opportunity to write down their commitments and have others pray for them.

Transcript

Full commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to say now that at the close of this meeting there will be an opportunity for you to make a response to what God has been saying to you throughout this conference. We're not going to make an appeal for you to stand to your feet or come out to the front or anything like that.

But we're going to pause at the end of this message for a few moments for God to just confirm to you what He's been saying during the week. We're going to ask you to take a piece of paper and a pencil or a pen and ask yourself two questions. First question is what has God been saying to you through this week or maybe even through the Sarnia Conference? The second question we're going to ask you is what action are you going to take in response to what God has been saying? And we want you, if God has been saying something really clear and specific to you, to write it down on that piece of paper.

And then to put how you're going to respond. And then to fold it up and at the close of the service come and pop it in this box at the front. This is so that a number of us can pray with you over the commitments you are making before God this week.

Now if you want to, you can put your name and your address on the piece of paper. If you don't want to, that's fine. If you do put your name and address, it's quite possible, in fact probable, that some of us will follow it up with a letter in the weeks or months ahead.

Now I will read all of the pieces of paper which are put in the box. If you want to put anything down which you feel is personal or confidential, feel free to do that and if it has that on it, it will go no further than myself. There are a number of tremendous books on that book table about full commitment to Jesus Christ.

I have just finished this book, Fear No Evil by David Watson. I'll be very honest with you, I was preaching at a convention last weekend and I could hardly get my sermons prepared because I just couldn't stop reading this book. David Watson is a man whom God has used in a tremendous way in the United Kingdom and throughout the world over the last 20 years.

About 18 months ago, he went to a doctor for a fairly normal check-up and found that he had an incurable cancer. Now this book describes in most honest terms his personal struggle with cancer. He faces that tremendous question of why does God allow suffering? I've read a lot on the problem of suffering.

I've read C.S. Lewis on suffering but I've never read anything better than this. It really is a book about total commitment to the will of God for your life. I assure you, once you start reading this, you'll find it very, very difficult to stop until you get to the end.

This book, The Cost of Commitment by John White is about the best book I think I've ever read on Christian commitment. You read some books about discipleship and you come away with your teeth, you know, gritting your teeth thinking, well, I suppose it's right and I'll have to do it. I came away from reading this book feeling tremendous joy because John White presents the absolute common sense and the utter joy of being totally committed to Jesus Christ.

We also have David Watson's great book just entitled Discipleship. Ralph Shallis, a great friend of O.M., who will be preaching, I think, at the August summer campaign conference, his book From Now On. Charles Marsh, another great friend of O.M. for many years, a missionary to Muslim North Africa, now I think about 82, 83 years of age, still going on for God.

That's his book, Into Action. Now this book is probably George Verwer's favourite book of the moment, Love Covers. It's a message to a divided church and it gives what it calls a viable platform for Christian unity.

It might be a very helpful book to send back to your pastor or your youth leader after you've read it yourself. Time's getting short. Let's make use of the free literature and the book table.

And remember, for every full book you buy, one book from the other table free tonight. Now let's turn to Luke's Gospel and chapter 14. We're going to read from verse 25 to verse 33.

I'll read in my Bible. So please follow in your own language. 25 to 33.

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus and turning to them he said, If anyone comes to me and doesn't hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower.

Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying this fellow began to build and was not able to finish. Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with 10,000 men to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. One of the great indictments made against evangelical Christians, as we thought to some degree last night, is this idea that as evangelicals, we are far too dogmatic. We believe we are right and everyone else is wrong.

We believe there is only one way to God and we are walking on it. Of course in this age of compromise and sophistication, that increasingly is a very, very difficult line to take. And I wonder if some of you have felt the pressure, as I have done from time to time, of maintaining that this book is the inerrant Word of God.

I wonder if you have felt the pressure of maintaining your position that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. I wonder if you have been tempted, as I have done from time to time, just to move an inch or two from these firm beliefs. You are going to have the very greatest difficulty moving even an inch without destroying your faith as a whole.

Because Christianity is an authoritative faith. We know the awesome authority which the Bible claims for itself. It says all of Scripture is breathed out by God.

The Christian Church is seen in the Bible as an authoritative structure. It preaches an authoritative message from God Himself. It takes a definite stand on doctrinal and moral issues.

And at the centre of Christianity stands a man of awesome authority, Jesus Christ. We believe the world is in the mess it's in today fundamentally because it's rejected the authority of this man. The world is scattered with individuals whose lives are in a shambles because they've said they won't have this man to reign over them.

The Church in many places is ineffective because it's rejected the authority of this man and the authority of this book. Tonight I want us to consider the authority of Jesus Christ. I think it's possible to grow up with a very, almost effeminate view of Jesus.

A simple, weak view of Jesus. This idea of gentle Jesus, meek and mild. And people think that meekness and weakness must be associated.

Let's consider the authority of this man for a moment. And I want you to consider four simple points about his authority. First of all, this authority was given to Jesus by God the Father.

Remember Jesus at the moment of His baptism. For a moment He appears to be a man just like everyone else. He needs to be baptised just like every other human being.

But there He is just coming up out of the water and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him as a dove. And the heaven opens and a voice speaks. And God the Father declares, This is My beloved Son.

And the same thing happens on the Mount of Transfiguration. Again the voice of heaven speaks and says, This is My beloved Son. And then God adds just two words, Hear Him.

Listen to Him. In other words, this is the person you must listen to above everything else. You're waiting for a word.

You're looking for answers to your questions. Seeking solutions to your problems. You've been reading the philosophers.

You're asking where can we have final authority. Well here is God's answer. Listen to Jesus Christ.

And then that authority secondly was claimed by Jesus Himself. If ever a man spoke with authority, it was this man. Listen to him talking about truth.

How do other religious leaders speak about truth? Well they write down their ideas, their philosophies. And they say to their followers, This is truth as I have come to understand it. If you will follow this line of truth, then you will know life, you will know fulfilment.

But how does Jesus speak about truth? He doesn't say this is truth as I understand it. He says I am truth. I am truth incarnate.

He doesn't say follow this. He says follow me. Remember how the Lord Jesus went around the world almost demanding that people should follow Him.

Commanding them to leave their businesses, leave their families and follow Him. He said that people must be willing to die for Him. He even said that at the end of the age He would return to judge the world.

The authority given by God was claimed by Jesus. And then thirdly, it was recognized by other people. The people of our Lord's day were quite used to the idea of an itinerant Pharisee.

A Pharisee who moved around the towns and villages. He would stop in the village square and a crowd would gather and he would give his religious speech. But when Jesus visited the village, the common people immediately recognized something different.

Matthew tells us in his Gospel the crowds were astonished at his teaching. Why were they so surprised? They said this man teaches us as one who has authority. And then fourthly, this authority was recognized not just by other people, but more significantly, it was recognized by the demons.

When the demons saw Jesus coming towards them, they cried out, why have you come to disturb us before the time? We know who you are. You are the Holy One of God. The demons recognized Jesus.

The demons were afraid of Jesus. They were afraid of His authority. I want you to have a clear Biblical picture of Jesus in your mind tonight.

Yes, He was a baby in His mother's arms, the most common picture of Jesus. But He was a man of absolute authority, given by God, claimed by Jesus, recognized by the common people and feared even by the demons. Now the question we must ask ourselves tonight is where does Jesus claim to wield His authority today? Where does He claim to have authority today in the world? I want to suggest three areas to you.

First of all, the Lord Jesus claims authority over the whole universe and over this world. You remember those words which preceded the Great Commission. All authority, Jesus said, in heaven and on earth, has been given to me.

Jesus claims power over His universe. I wonder if you've got a wrong idea of spiritual warfare. Do you have this idea that there's an amazing battle going on in the world today and sometimes the devil's on top and sometimes Jesus is on top and we don't really know who's going to win in the end? Absolutely not.

Jesus is the victor. He claims absolute authority over His world. When the devil said to Jesus on the top of that mountain all these I will give you, he had no right to make that offer.

Jesus is in authority in this world. The highest place that heaven affords is His by sovereign right. Now there's a little phrase in Colossians chapter 1 which expresses His authority in this world.

Paul says, in Jesus everything is held together. In other words, Paul says that Jesus holds the whole world together in His hands. Now if we're honest, sometimes it doesn't appear that way, does it? You listen to the television news, you read your newspaper and you ask yourself, is anyone in control? Maybe this has been a particularly rough week for you at this conference and you really don't understand some of the things that have been happening to you in the past 5 or 6 days.

You just can't put it all together. And the devil is just beginning to cause you to doubt. Is Jesus really in control? William Hendrickson tells the following little story.

It's a favourite of mine. It's the story of a woman who took her 2 children to one of our major airports. And they went into one of the observation towers and the children saw many aeroplanes flying around in the skies, apparently at tremendous speeds.

And one turned to his mother and said, Mummy, there's going to be a crash. There's going to be a crash. And the mother said, Yes, son, it appears to be that way.

Many planes, tremendous speeds. But just along the way there and everybody who flies hopes this is the case. Just along the way there is a man in a control tower.

And he's got his hands on certain buttons and switches and he's talking into a microphone and he's holding the whole sky together in his hands. Now, that's exactly Paul's viewpoint of the position of Jesus in this world. This world, your world, might appear to be chaotic.

But Jesus has this world in His hands. Another Bible commentator put it like this. Jesus has got His hands on the reins of the universe.

And He never allows those reins to slip from His grasp. And I want you to be assured as you go out this summer that Jesus has His hands upon the reins of your life. And they will never slip from His holy grasp.

The devil may take you or allow you to go through some very chaotic situations in the coming months. But the reins have not slipped from the grasp of Jesus. He cannot, the devil cannot take them from His grasp.

I wonder how you respond to that tonight. I respond to this picture of Jesus in two ways. First of all, it gives me confidence and assurance.

And I really hope you're going to go from this conference with those characteristics. Confidence and assurance. The Lord is King.

I hope there's not going to be depression in your experience in the coming months and weeks. Martin Luther was going through a period of very serious depression. And one morning he came down to breakfast and he found that his wife was dressed in black clothes of mourning.

So Luther said to Catherine, who's died. And Catherine replied, God. So Luther flew into one of his quite normal rages.

He flew into a rage, anger. And he said, how can you make such a suggestion? The eternal God of the universe dying? And so Catherine just very quietly replied, well, if He's still alive, what's wrong with you? Do you believe the Lord is King? Do you believe He has His hands upon the reins of the world? Are you going to live your life with the confidence and assurance of that within you? When people look at your life, are they going to conclude God is dead or Jesus is Lord? A second result, if we really believe that Jesus is Lord should be boldness in evangelism. This statement that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus was given in the context of evangelism.

Just remember what those disciples were like after the death of Jesus. They were locked away in an upper room living in fear of their lives. And almost the next day, Jesus is saying to this timid bunch, I want you to go and conquer the world.

But He doesn't just say that, and thank God He didn't just say that. Before He sent them out, He said, look, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me and I am with you. That's why I want you to go.

And you're not walking out of this conference center in your own strength. You're walking out in the strength of the One in whom all this authority has been invested. Jesus then, first of all, claims authority over the whole universe.

But then secondly, particularly in the Bible, He claims authority over His church, His body, His special possession. In Ephesians chapter 1, we're told that God has made Jesus head of all things for the church. I'm an elder of a church.

It's always interesting for me to go to business meetings in our church. I don't know what business meetings in your church are like. But ours always follow the same pattern.

We gather together, just the men of course, it's the Plymouth brethren, and we have a word of prayer, one person. Then for three hours we discuss the business of the church. Then we close with a word of prayer.

I wonder who's Lord of that situation? Is Jesus Lord of that church? Are we crying out to Him for His plans for His church? Or are we really working out our ideas and then asking the Lord to bless our plans? I wonder what it's going to be like on your team this summer. Maybe particularly, I speak to team leaders for a few moments. I wonder if you're going to recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ over your team.

I wonder if you're going to take that time to wait upon Him for His plans. What does He want to do in your life and the lives of your team in the coming month? There must be a balance of course between working everything out ourselves. We need to be planning ahead, but also waiting on the Lord for His mind and His will.

I could speak a lot of His authority in the church, but we don't have time. I want to move on to the third area. Thirdly of course, He claims to have authority over your life and mine.

We know the emphasis of the New Testament writers that they're bond slaves of Jesus Christ. In other words, they have willingly, voluntarily accepted the rule, the reign of Jesus over their lives. Paul gives us a very important definition of a Christian in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. He says, You are not your own because you've been bought with a price.

Just in the last 15 minutes of this message, I want to tell you what that means to me. If I am no longer my own, if I can no longer rule my own life, what does that mean in practice? And I just want to give you five simple things that it means to me. First of all, it means that Christ has authority over my use of time.

Jesus is Lord of every minute of my existence. The essential difference between one person and another person can often be seen in their use of time. I wonder how many of you have been using your time right this week at this conference.

I wonder how many of you have been slipping out of this session and that session. I wonder if you've really given every minute of this week to the Lord Jesus. Sometimes when I meet Christians and I ask them about the difference in their life from before they became a Christian to now, it's very, very difficult to get any answer at all.

There doesn't seem to be any difference. They seem to spend their time in the same way as they used to, do the same things they used to do. How does the Bible describe conversion? The Bible describes conversion as death.

A person who is converted dies to his old life. A totally new life in Jesus begins. I wonder how much real death has taken place in my life so far.

Death to the old ambitions. Death to the old desires. Death to the old ways of spending my time.

If Jesus is Lord, He must have control of every minute of my life. Secondly, I'm just telling you what this means to me. Secondly, it means He must have authority over my use of money.

I may speak rather passionately on this subject because it's something I've thought about a lot and as you know I've written a little book on the subject. I believe one of the greatest failings of my life for many years has been how I have used what God has given to me. I believe it's one of the greatest failures of the church in the western world, how they have used the money, the resources God has given.

Donald Hay is a lecturer in economics at Jesus College Oxford. Donald Hay. He's written a book and in this book he says that in his opinion the greatest failing of the Christian church today has been that how Christians spend their money is so very little different from the way the world spends its money.

He says in my view the world is committed to accumulating possessions and so is the church. There's no difference. I wonder if Jesus is Lord of your purse, Lord of your bank account.

I believe it's time for the church in the western world to take seriously again such verses as Luke 14, 33. Jesus says, if you don't give up everything you have you can't be my disciple. Unless I'm willing to take my hands off, unless I'm willing to hand over control of my house, my car, my bank account, I can't be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I hope you're going to face these issues tonight. The Lord of the universe, that man of awesome authority, claims authority over my life and yours. That means every moment of my day, every pound and penny in my bank.

Thirdly, it means he has authority over my doctrine. It means that I can no longer just believe what I want to believe. I used to do that.

It was a very pleasant way to live my life. I just believed what I wanted to believe, what I found to be convenient. If I found something difficult, if I found that it demanded something of me, then I discarded it.

I just lived for myself. Then Jesus came. And I can no longer believe what I want to believe.

I have to believe what is in His Word, however difficult I might find it. His Word says, the heathen are lost without Christ. Now I don't know how you feel about that.

I find that very, very difficult to believe. I find it difficult to believe that millions of people will be in hell and they will never have heard of Jesus Christ. I can't take that easily.

Yet the Bible says it's true. I can no longer believe what I want to believe. I hope that you are in the practice of bringing every idea, every new teaching, back to the authority of Jesus Christ.

There are many new teachers arising up associated with different sections of the church today. Some of them say they are bringing a new message from God. And they can very often quote miraculous happenings to back up what they are teaching.

Large crowds are following. You know, many Christians fail to bring what they are saying back to the authority of Scripture. It doesn't matter how magnificent a speaker a man may be.

It doesn't matter what miracles he may quote. We are under the authority of Jesus Christ. And if it's not revealed here in this book, then I warn you to be extremely careful.

Many of you know the work of the children of God. When they first came over to London, many Christian leaders, some of whom I know personally quite well. Yet they would tell you today that they were carried away on a wave of emotion.

They made one tragic error. They looked and listened to people. They looked at what was happening and they didn't bring things back to the authority of this book.

And today on the streets of London, that same group are sending their women out in prostitution, based on Romans 12.1, present your body a living sacrifice. And the argument is that you present your body to men and bring them back to the commune. I trust Jesus is Lord of your doctrine.

Fourthly, it means that Christ has authority over my morals. For many of you, listening to Nigel on Monday night was a new experience. You've never heard, or maybe it's a long time since you've heard a Christian preacher speak so honestly on the issue of morals.

And I know from personal conversation with some of you that that has raised questions in your mind. And there's a battle going on within. Are you going to allow Jesus to have authority in that area? Are you going to bring things back under the authority of his word? Or is this one area you're going to live selfishly in? You're going to do what you want to do.

You're not really so concerned about what Jesus wants of you. And then finally it means Christ's authority over my future. Over my future.

Some of us are in the process of making great decisions about the rest of our lives. Maybe over the next few weeks you've got to choose a line of study which you're going to concentrate on as a student. Maybe you're going to have to choose your career.

Maybe you're in the process of choosing a life partner. Some of you after last night's message have been talking to me about what impact the need of world mission is going to have upon your life. I just want to remind you again, you have been bought with a price.

My life is not my own. Jesus has died. His blood has been shed.

That was the price. How can I hold back one minute of my time, one penny in my pocket, one item of my beliefs? He must have every day in my future. He must be in control in the area of morals.

We hear a lot in the church today, Jesus is Lord. We sing it often. But I wonder, is it a badge that you wear or is it reality in your life? I believe that God has spoken to many of you during these past few days.

Not just during tonight's message, but throughout this week God has been speaking to you. He's been touching certain areas of your life where you need a fresh commitment. And we want to give you this opportunity as we get towards the end of this conference to make your response to what God has been saying.

And I'd like us just to bow quietly now in the presence of God and just for a couple of minutes to think through all the things God has been saying to us. And I'd like you to allow God time to write those truths upon your life. Let's just spend time quietly in His presence.

We do want to thank you for speaking to so many of us at this conference. I want to thank you that my last day and a half has been taken up with talking to people to whom you have been speaking. We want to praise you for your grace and mercy.

I don't know why, Lord, you go on speaking to me. Many times you have to teach me the same lesson over and over again. But I praise you for your mercy to us all.

Help us now, Lord, to respond to you in faith and to make some fresh steps forward in our spiritual lives. In Jesus' name. We want to just give you now a couple of minutes to take a piece of paper.

If you haven't got one, borrow one from your friend beside you. And just on that sheet of paper answer these two questions. If God has been speaking to you.

If you don't think there's anything specific that God has been saying, then don't feel pressured at all. But if you're clear that God has said something, you write that down on the sheet of paper and underneath what you're going to do about what God has been saying. And remember, you can put your name and address on if you wish, but you don't have to.

So we'll just give a couple of minutes for people to do that. Meanwhile, the rest of us can just remain prayerfully quiet.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/29/SID29287.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/peter-maiden/commitment/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net