

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Involved or Involved and Committed?

I love a good country breakfast, probably because I was raised on good country breakfasts. The breakfast menu I have in my mind consists of country smoked bacon, sausage, fried potatoes, two large eggs, homemade biscuits, and gravy. Merely thinking about such a meal makes my mouth water. However, several entities are involved in the production of such a good country breakfast.

A farmer had to raise the chickens, and the chickens had to lay the eggs. A farmer had to till the ground and sow the wheat, plant the potatoes and patiently wait for the harvest, then harvest the wheat and potatoes and mill the wheat into flour so I can enjoy the delicious biscuits made by the cook. A farmer had to raise the hogs and send them to a butcher who butchers them so I can enjoy the tasty bacon and sausage. And a cook had to cook the meal and the waiter had to take my order and bring it to the table so that I could enjoy such a delicious breakfast feast.

Although I could mention others who might be involved in making this meal possible, I'm sure we all agree that at least the farmer, the chicken, the pig, the cook, and the waiter all participated. But there is something special about one of these participants—mister piggy. Not only was he *involved* in this meal, he was also *committed* to it; he had to DIE so I could enjoy the bacon and sausage. As you consider this illustration, I'd like to ask a question—are you *involved*, or are you both *involved and committed* to the cause of Christ? Which is it?

## Definitions

The word “commit” is defined by Dictionary.com in the context of this discussion as: “to do; perform; to pledge (oneself) to a position on an issue or question; express (one’s intention, feeling, etc.); to bind or obligate, as by a pledge or assurance; to give in trust or charge, especially for safe keeping; consign; commend; to bind or obligate oneself, as by pledge or assurance; devote or engage oneself to a person or thing.”

According to *The Synonym Finder* by J. I. Rodale, the words “include,” “contain,” and “number among,” are synonyms for the word “commit.”

Also, according to Rodale, the words, “pledge, covenant, promise, vow, giving one’s word, obligation, and responsibility” are some of the synonyms for the word “commitment.”

The word “commitment” in the context in which I am using it is defined as: *commitment* to a cause, specifically the cause of Christ. I have in mind a key text that teaches us we must be committed to Christ and His cause. In Matthew 6:33-34, Jesus said, “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.**” After teaching in the previous verses that one is not to be consumed by worldly cares and concerns, Jesus climaxed His teaching by saying that the FIRST thing we seek must be God’s kingdom and His righteousness. The word “**first**” is from the Greek word *proton*, which according to **Strong**, means: “firstly (in time, place, order, or importance):—before, at the beginning, chiefly (at, at the) first (of all).”

*The Fourfold Gospel* commentary, by J. W. McGarvey and Phillip Pendelton, on pages 259-260, contains the following comment on this verse: “*The Kingdom of heaven is the real object of our search. It must be sought first both in point of time and of interest, and it must be kept ever first in our thoughts after it is found. That Christian faith and obedience leads to worldly prosperity is proved by countless instances which are multiplied with each passing day. The security of Christ’s kingdom leads to the cheerfulness which renews the*

*strength, and to the undistracted industry which brings success.*” Hence, the Lord’s kingdom is to be our first priority, and the Lord here teaches that He is unwilling to accept anything less than *first* in our priorities. “**First**” is “*first*” and everything else is second whether man accepts the teaching of Jesus or not.

Many are familiar with other key *commitment* texts, such as Matthew 22:36-39, where we read, “**Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”**” It doesn’t take a scholar to determine Who this passage says is to be put *first* in the life of a Christian.

Consider also Jesus’ statement in Luke 14:26-27 where He said, “**If any man come to me, and hate not (love less, tgmc) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.**” Again, it is no secret Who this passage says comes *first*.

We could cite numerous other texts that teach *commitment* to the cause of Christ. For those who claim to be Christians, everyone and everything, even our closest family relationships, must be second behind Christ and His cause (cf. Psa. 37:4-6; Matt. 19:27-29; Lk. 16:1-13). Being Christ’s disciple requires, yea demands, that we give Him *first-place commitment*.

A good friend and fellow gospel preacher said this about commitment: “*Commitment requires sacrifice, doing what you might not feel like doing. You can’t fight against Goliath and his armies if you are on their side! You can’t fight a good fight and war a good warfare if you refuse to engage in the battle. With some, it’s fear, and with others it is nothing short of lazy causeless Christians. God is looking for those who are willing to take the battle to the enemy and once there, willing to sling the stone God has prepared.*”

If you haven’t read the account of David’s defeat of Goliath recently, read 1 Samuel 17 and think of the *commitment* David had when he faced the giant, Goliath!

### **What Does Commitment Require?**

**Commitment requires sacrifice.** Since Jesus sacrificed Himself by dying on the cross for us, our lives must be living sacrifices for His cause (Eph. 5:1; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:19). Paul wrote, “**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God**” (Rom. 12:1-2). Christians are to use their physical bodies and minds to glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eccl. 12:7). Our bodies and spirits belong to God; they’re on loan to us. Every person will give account for the way he lived here on this earth (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:4). Our eternal destiny rests on how we conduct our lives on this earth.

Peter taught that we are priests, in a royal priesthood, and thus must offer spiritual sacrifices. Said he, “**Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ**” (1 Pet. 2:5). Hence, our service is to be holy and acceptable to God as the sacrifices under the old law (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 4:3) were to be. But we offer living (not dead) sacrifices by committing our all to obeying and serving Christ.

**Commitment requires overcoming fear of others.** No man can faithfully serve Christ when he fears other men. King Saul feared the people, obeyed their voice, disobeyed God, and consequently lost his kingdom (1 Sam. 15:23, 24). The religious leaders of Jesus’ day feared men (Mk. 11:27-33). The parents of the blind man healed by Jesus feared the people and would not confess Christ because they were afraid of being cast out of the Jewish religion (Jn. 9:13-34). Jesus warned His disciples about the persecution they would suffer at the hands of other men, the difficulties they would have to endure, and the commitments they had to make in order to follow and serve Him (Lk. 9:57-61).

Jesus, through the divine writers, condemned those who were afraid to follow Him and commit to His cause.

He declared, ***“Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”*** (Matt.10:26-28).

The apostle John wrote, ***“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful (cowardly-NKJV), and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”*** (Rev. 21:7, 8).

It is well to notice those with whom the fearful keep company. These will be those who are spiritual cowards of every form, shade, and color.

**Commitment requires toil and labor.** Being a Christian is no bed of roses. Jesus warned the apostles that they would face serious persecution and the first-century saints were severely persecuted (Matt. 10:16-22; Acts 8-9:2).

Paul wrote, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). The toil-and-labor requirement necessitates, as Paul stated in 1 Timothy 6:12, that we ***“fight the good fight of faith.”*** In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul outlined the spiritual body armor that Christians must wear so they can overcome and win their battles with the devil. Any missing piece of armor can result in severe spiritual injury or defeat and eventual death from the arrows of evil. In order to stand, we must ***“put on the WHOLE armour of God.”***

Also, we must plant ***“the seed, which is the word of God.”*** Anyone who has planted a vegetable garden is aware of the pleasurable labor involved in planting and tending a garden. Just as we plant physical gardens and wait for them to bear fruit; likewise, we must plant the spiritual seed of God, the water it, and wait patiently for Him to give the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-9). James wrote, ***“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain”*** (Jas. 5:7). Our toiling must be in the Lord’s vineyard. We cannot toil in the wrong vineyard. We are to toil ***“on the Lord’s side”*** (Ex. 32:26) and labor in harvesting the souls of lost sheep (Matt. 9:37-38). In the final judgment, we will reap what we have sown (Gal. 6:7-10).

**Commitment requires trusting in the Lord’s will—not man’s will.** Since mankind is incapable of directing his own steps, he needs God’s guidance and direction. The wisdom writer wrote, ***“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”*** (Prov. 14:12; cf 16:25). Jeremiah wrote, ***“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”*** (Jer. 10:23).

Isaiah further expressed the fact that God’s wisdom, nature and power are far superior to man’s when he wrote, ***“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”*** (Isa. 55:8-11).

Simply put, man cannot survive without God’s blessings and guidance. The political and religious leaders of our day are no different from those about whom Jesus spoke when He said, ***“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”*** (Matt. 15:14). They are in the ***“ditch”*** as well as their followers.

We must conform our will to God’s will. As Jesus came to do the will of His Father (Jn. 4:34; 6:38, 40), we must commit ourselves to doing God and His Son’s will (Eph. 6:1-7; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Matt. 7:21-23; 6:10).

**Commitment requires that we endure to the end.** The uncommitted faint and fail. The parable of the soils graphically illustrates the differences between the faint of heart and the committed. Three of the four soils—

representing hearts of men—resulted in eventual failure (Lk. 8:4-15; Matt. 13:2-11, 18-23; Mk. 4:1-20). We must endure life's difficult trials and seek the escape route God provides with every temptation (Jas. 1:1-5, 12-16; 1 Cor. 10:12-13).

We must patently *endure ridicule and criticism* as Jesus did and in the same manner He did. Peter wrote, ***“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously: Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”*** (1 Pet. 2:20-25).

We must *endure persecution* as Jesus did when He was crucified. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, ***“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”*** (Matt. 5:10-12).

Peter commanded Christians to *endure suffering* for Christ's sake when he wrote, ***“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God rest upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters”*** (1 Pet. 4:12-15).

As the apostles John and Paul taught, we must be ***“faithful unto death,”*** and if we are, we will receive ***“a crown of life”*** (Rev. 2:10; cf. 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Finally, are you just *involved*, or are you *involved and committed* to Christ and His cause? Those who are only involved are only at the open gate of the Lord's vineyard. These need to continue on to spiritual perfection and develop into committed laborers in the Lord's vineyard. Commitment necessitates sacrifice, courage, toil and labor, trusting in the Lord's will and enduring to the end. Be both *involved and committed!*

The words Paul wrote in Romans 8:31-39 express commitment and I close with the words found in verses 38 and 39 of this text, ***“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.”*** Dear readers, our Lord demands His disciples to be *involved and committed*. Can He count on you? – **tgmc** ■

***“5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”*** (2 Peter 1:5-11).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: [www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com](http://www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com) - Email: [lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com](mailto:lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com) - Phone: 209-365-9250