

Title : THE COMMITMENTS GOD DESIRES

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Text : Romans 12:1-21

Prop. : Christians Must Make Sincere Commitments In Their Lives And Relationships.

Introduction:

The title of the message that I want to speak on is the Commitments God Desires. The world today is devoid of commitments. Just think of marriage relationships that end in divorce. The Philippines does not have any divorce law, but married couples also separate. We even have gone further because our laws are now quite liberal in that we permit annulments of marriages. Whether couples divorce, separate or annul their marriages, they have broken their marriage vows. They have thrown their commitments out of the window.

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. To biblical scholars, his letter is called a "treatise" or a formal letter that dealt with salvation by faith. The letters of Paul usually have two parts, the theological section and the practical section. In his letter to the Roman Christians, he included a subject on commitment. It is found in the practical section of the letter beginning with chapter 12. He calls the Roman Christians to a life of commitment. In this light, as Christians we must make sincere commitments in our lives and relationships. This morning let me dwell on Romans 12:1-21 and bring the areas of commitments we must continually make.

I. COMMITMENT TO THE CHURCH, vv. 3-8

A. Commitment by way of humility.

Paul says in verse 3, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought..." This verse must be in relation to other members within the Church. This is more manifest in Philippians 2:3 when Paul said, "...consider others better than yourselves." This meant that the Roman Christians needed to be humble in their relationships with one another. The exercise of humility in our relationships is essential. Many times it would be easy for us to compare ourselves with others and say, "I am better than him." Someone said, "Humility is a slippery word, the moment you think you have it you lose it."

B. Commitment by exercising the spiritual gifts.

Paul says in verse 6, "We have different gifts according to the grace given us..." Paul then enumerates the different gifts listed in this passage. At the end of each of each gifts is an exhortation, "let him...use, serve, teach...etc." The essence of this exhortation is for the Roman Christians to exercise the gifts God has given to them within the body, the Church, as we find in verse 4-5. This is also true with the Church today and each member must remember that he has a role to play in the Church by the exercise of their spiritual gifts.

Many years back, I saw a book written by A.W. Tozer entitled, "Tragedy in the Church." I was very curious. So I got hold of the book and scanned the contents of the book. The book was about spiritual gifts. Tozer wrote that the church is facing tragedy in its existence because the spiritual gifts are not in operation within the Church. The nature of the Church is that it must function according to the gifts of the Spirit. This is God's design for the Church and we need to exercise the gifts for ministry in the Church and eventually in the world. It will indeed be tragic to the Church that does not exercise the gifts of the Spirit.

II. COMMITMENT TO OTHERS, vv. 9-21

The commitment to others in verses 9-21 is through the one principle of love. What Paul is doing in these verses is applying the principle of love which is found in the Gospels. He is now applying it to a particular situation and he seems to suggest that it be applied to...

A. To the Community of Believers, vv. 9-16.

He says, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." This exhortation of Paul is straightforward and needs only to be applied. The context of its application is the "body." Notice that he mentions the words, "one another" three times and then refers to "God's people" in verse 13. Here, Paul wants the Roman Christians to exercise love within the household of faith- the Church. Paul emphasizes the communal aspect of this love. Today, let love be manifests in the community of God's people.

B. To the Community of the Non-believers, 17-21.

Paul goes beyond the boundary of the church. He mentions, "everybody" in verse 17 and "everyone" in verse 18. Looking at verses 17 to 21 as a whole, this section is an application of what Jesus said in the Gospels, "Love your enemies." He also quotes from Proverbs 25:21-22 because it mentions the word, "enemy" and brings home the point that we are "not to repay anyone evil for evil." Instead he exhorts and says, "overcome evil with good." The human tendency is to take revenge.

When I was younger, I played basketball. Basketball is a physical game. You get banged up and accidentally or intentionally hit or pushed. There was a time when I played and I was pushed. I took notice of the person who pushed me and in my mind I said, "watch out." I will do the same to you. In life, we get pushed around and people would wrong us and hurt us. Do we retaliate or love the person? I know how difficult it is, but we have no choice but to love our enemies. Love and serve those who wronged and hurt you. There is no better way to take. It is the way of love- God's love.

III. COMMITMENT TO GOD, vv. 1-2.

Paul in this section appeals to the Roman Christians. He has 3 basic appeals. The commitment to God is a...

A. Commitment that involves consecration, v. 1

Paul appeals first of all that in the light of God's mercies, we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Bodies here do not just refer to the physical body, but the whole being of man. The offering of our lives has to be "living," that is, alive, not dead so that God may utilize it for His glory. It has to be holy, that is, without sin and that which pleases God. Paul says, this becomes our "spiritual act of worship." Earlier, in 6:13, Paul already exhorted the Roman Christians to "offer themselves to God." Here in 21:1, Paul is reiterating and reminding them once again.

B. Commitment that involves non conformity, v. 2a

Paul strongly says to the Roman Christians, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." What does "pattern of this world mean?" It means a lifestyle under the influence of sin. You have this mentioned in 1:18-32; even until 3:20. Then in 6:13, Paul exhorts the Roman Christians "not to offer their bodies to sin."

C. Commitment involves transformation through a renewed mind, v. 2b

The former exhortation, Paul does it in the negative, now he does it in the positive and says, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The word used for transformation in the original has the sense of "change through a process." The change has to be through a renewed mind. In 6:11, Paul says, "count yourselves dead to sin." Then in Col. 3:2, it says, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Then in Phil. 4:8, Paul says, "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, THINK about such things."

Paul wants the Roman Christians to commit their lives to God so that they can continue to experience the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit (8:1-39). Life in the Spirit results in peace, access, joy, hope, love, the glory of God, etc.

Let me share to you a commitment of one of our Pastors. He was a convert from the Islam Faith. Then he decided to enter Bible College and was trained to be a pastor. Because of a sense of a call to minister to his people, he committed himself to doing ministry amongst the Muslims. In June of last year, as he was going back home from solemnizing a wedding, he was stopped by a group of gun-wielding man up and shot him together with his eldest daughter. He sustained about 18 gunshot wounds while his daughter about 14. Both died on the spot. Months prior to his murder, he had received text messages in his cell phone that he will die. He was threatened with death. He could have gone out of the area, but he did not and continued to minister until his death. Talk of commitment, here is one who was committed to God and His calling.

Conclusion:

Friends, God desires our commitment. We are just entering the 2nd month of the year and I know some of you have made resolutions at the beginning of the year. I do not know with the others. Let me ask you this question, “how is our commitment?” The commitment God desires from us is a commitment without any reservations. He wants us to be fully committed to Him and when that happens, our other commitments will follow, namely our commitment to the church and others. Ajith Fernando, a Sri Lankan minister wrote in his book, “Jesus Driven Ministry,” I quote, “Commitment does pay, for it begets commitment in others...” May I then invite you to a life of commitment with God- commitments that He desires.

