

Laying hold on Eternal Life: By Commitment

We have come to our fourth and final element of how to Raise Godly Families – One Prayer at a Time. This is the area Paul commands us as he says “Lay Hold on Eternal Life”. We have been examining just how to do that and have found that we must lay hold on contentment, and consecration, and now this morning – on commitment! May I challenge you with Laying Hold on Commitment this morning?

Our text is Luke 9.57-62

What I am about to say to you is common knowledge. In fact all of us who ever traveled on a highway have learned exactly what I am about to share. But to underline our text in your minds, I'll remind you of an old truth most of us learn in High School.

This week I reverted back to my earlier life. At age 21 I took the Colorado Motor vehicle test and became an official Colorado school bus driver. I drove a big yellow bus around Boulder, Colorado for 3 weeks that summer. This past Monday I climbed aboard a 40 foot long diesel powered bus weighing 42,000 pounds and for 32 hours I guided it along 2000 miles of roads at an average speed of 92.11 FEET PER SECOND.

My bus was 100 ½ inches wide, the lanes of the roads were 144 inches – so I had a comfortable 21 ½ inches of space between me and either concrete walls or other steel vehicles flying alongside of my 21 ton bullet hurtling down the ribbon of road at 92.11 FEET PER SECOND.

Why the details of driving? Because the 42000 pound steel bullet traveling at 92 FPS is kept in that 21-½ inch tolerance corridor by a steering wheel. From the moment I start that bus rolling until after it is fully stopped – I am committed. What exactly does that mean?

- When I hear a noise behind me I have just about ½ of a second to glance that way before my eyes fly back and get riveted again on the world spinning under my tires at blinding speeds. **That's Commitment!**
- When a small, sweet voice of one of the children at my side makes me reach over with one hand to hug them, but the other hand never leaves the wheel. **That's Commitment!**
- When my gracious and lovely wife slips to one knee beside me and says here is something for you to eat, I smile, put out my hand and try to take whatever she has brought me but always with one eye locked onto the road ahead of me and one hand firmly grasping the wheel. **That's Commitment!**

- Commitment causes me to find everything secondary to whatever I am committed to. Nothing is allowed to distract me, nothing is allowed to draw me away for more than one second before my eyes and mind and body get back to being riveted on the road ahead. **That's Commitment!**

Now please follow along as I read Luke 9.57-62.

What Jesus calling out and asking for in our text? Is it nothing less than what you and I do every time we drive? We listen, talk, eat, think, even take notes or go over our work – but always with a total focus upon the road ahead. Jesus asks us focus our attention on His Call upon our lives. Now, let me introduce you to a man who was committed to Christ's calling on his life. His name was David Livingstone.

The shadow of a sixty-year-old man was silhouetted against the canvas of the tent. The flickering candle cast a golden aura inside as he knelt beside a small wood and canvas cot. Rhythmic tropical rain lightly pelted the tent as he prayed beside his bed. The prayer was one he had written out many years before. If you were able to hear that night what God heard it would have sounded much like this:

O Lord since Thou hast died, To give Thyself for me,
No sacrifice would seem to great, For me to make for Thee.

Outside the native porters, guides and cooks who had followed this man for nearly 20 years through the jungle heard the low sound of his voice communing with God as he always had done before bed. Then the candle flickered out and they also retired to sleep through the rainy night.

The next morning the cold and stiff body of David Livingstone was still kneeling beside the cot when his beloved native brothers found him. He was so thin from the countless bouts with malaria, his skin darkened by the years of Equatorial African sun was loosely draped over the bones of his earthly tent now vacant. His spirit had soared immortal, making its flight from the darkness of a disease ridden, weak and failing body to the realm of light and life in the presence of Jesus his King to whom he had consecrated his life.

WHO WAS DAVID LIVINGSTONE (1813-1873)?

- David Livingstone¹ was born in the Scottish city of Blantyre in 1813.
- At age ten he began working fourteen-hour days in the cotton mill to help support his impoverished family. There he learned by snatching sentences from a book on his spinning jenny, followed by two hours of night school. These disciplines kept him from being totally uneducated.
- He was converted at twelve, and had a profound spiritual awakening at twenty and resolved to be a medical missionary in China. From that point onward Livingstone studied Greek, theology, and medicine at Glasgow, returning to the mill during vacations to help pay expenses.

¹ Douglas, J. D., Comfort, Philip W. & Mitchell, Donald, Editors, *Who's Who in Christian History*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1992.

- Qualified in medicine, he was sent by the London Missionary Society in 1840 to South Africa, since the Opium War had closed China. Livingstone's heart had been fired by missionary Robert Moffat's words about having seen "the smoke of a thousand villages" where no missionary had ever been.
- Livingstone and his wife, Mary, Moffat's daughter, stayed in three homes in three years, ever moving further up-country. He was evangelist, doctor, teacher, builder, gardener, shoemaker, and carpenter. But all the time his eyes were on the "unknown north" beyond the fearsome Kalahari Desert.
- In 1852 Livingstone sent his wife and children home before he embarked on a four-year, six-thousand-mile journey that took him to Angola's Atlantic coast, then east to the Indian Ocean at Mozambique. During long weary journeys, debilitating illnesses, danger from wild animals and hostile tribes, he never relaxed his self-imposed discipline, but made observations, studied languages, kept his famous *Diaries*, and prepared scientific reports that brought him fame. He retained his humility, writing in 1853: "I will place no value on anything I have ... except in relation to the Kingdom of Christ."
- When Livingstone's wife died in 1861, he threw himself fiercely into his work. He disappeared from sight for ten years; and when found by Henry Morton Stanley of the *New York Herald* in 1871, Livingstone refused to go home. Two days later he wrote in his diary: "March 19, my birthday. My Jesus, my King, my Life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee. Accept me, and grant, O gracious Father, that ere the year is gone I may finish my work. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen." A year later his servants found him on his knees in his tent -- dead.
- David Livingstone, the renowned and noble missionary to Africa, wrote² in his journal, People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice, which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? . . . Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory, which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice, which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.
- At his death in 1873, such was their love for him that his native assistants bore his body fifteen hundred miles to the coast. One of them was among the huge crowd at the funeral in Westminster Abbey. Some words on Livingstone's tombstone there summarize his achievements: "For thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, to abolish the desolating slave trade of Central Africa."

With that background listen again through the tent as you can dimly see in the dark jungles of Africa the shadow of a sixty-year-old man silhouetted against the canvas of

² *Livingstone's Private Journal: 1851-53*, ed.. I. Schapera [London: Chatto & Windus, 1960], pp. 108, 132.

the tent. The flickering candle cast a golden aura inside as he knelt beside a small wood and canvas cot. Rhythmic tropical rain lightly pelted the tent as he prayed beside his bed. The prayer was one he had written out many years before. If you were able to hear that night what God heard it would have sounded much like this:

O Lord since Thou hast died, To give Thyself for me,
No sacrifice would seem to great, For me to make for Thee.

Lord send me anywhere, Only go with me;
Lay any burden on me, Only sustain me.
Sever any tie, Save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.
Lord Jesus my King, I consecrate my life Lord to Thee!

I only have one life, and that will soon be past;
I want my life to count for Christ, What's done for Him will last.

I follow Thee my Lord, And glory in Thy Cross;
I gladly leave the world behind, And count all gain as loss.

Lord send me anywhere, Only go with me;
Lay any burden on me, Only sustain me.
Sever any tie, Save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.
Lord Jesus my King, I consecrate my life Lord to Thee!

Parenting is life long. Praying keeps us on the front lines of our children's lives – all through our lives. Successful parenting of a godly family only has two requirements: get started in prayer and never quit that praying.

Before we are parents ***we are praying***, while we are up to our ears in those child filled years ***we are praying***, and after they launch out into their own lives ***we are praying***.

My philosophy of great parenting is that you raise a godly family – one prayer at a time.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. This morning is a practical, how to lesson in learning how to pray for our children.

We must pray for REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE: is seeing them genuinely saved, loving God's Word, living in victory, thinking of heaven, finding sin repulsive, staying tender toward God.

We must pray for INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE: is seeing them maintaining a clear conscience, learning to stand alone, seeking to stay pure, cultivating a servant's heart, never becoming bitter in trials.

We must pray for STABILTY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE: which is seeing them cultivating a love for their brothers and sisters, learning to trust God with hard situations and not to rebel, each loving the way God made them as men and women, waiting to meet God's chosen life partner for them.

Laying Hold on Eternal Life – means to pray for VITALITY IN THEIR ETERNAL LIFE.

1. **THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF CONTENTMENT.**

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for **I have learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (KJV) CONTENTMENT is a habit of life that helps us avoid things that deeply offend and grieve our Heavenly Father.

- The desire for things more than God
- The desire for pleasure more than godliness
- The desire for satisfaction through things more than to be satisfied by God.
- The desire for better things and other things that others have more than thanking God for what we have.
- The desire for the rewards of the physical world more than a desire for eternal rewards.

2. **THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF CONSECRATION. 1**

Timothy 6:9-12 But **those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare**, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, **flee these things and pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV)

3. **THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF COMMITMENT**

PERSONALLY KNOWING, SERVING, LOVING AND OBEYING THE LORD.

- 1 Chronicles 28:9 " As for you, my son Solomon, **know the God of your father**, and **serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind**; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. **If you seek Him, He will be found by you**; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (NKJV)
- 1 Chronicles 29:19 "And **give my son Solomon a loyal heart** to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision." (NKJV)
- 3 John 4 **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth**. (KJV)

Now turn with me to II Peter 3. Here Peter lists the areas of commitment he was charging those early believers to grasp.

1. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO KEEP ALERT -- A LACK OF COMMITMENT CLOUDS OUR MINDS. 2 Peter 3:10-11 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up 11 [Seeing] then [that] all these things shall be dissolved, what manner [of persons] ought ye to be in [all] holy conversation and godliness
2. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO BUILD FIREPROOF: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CLUTTERS OUR LIVES. This should Discourage Materialism and encourage us to Live expectantly 2 Peter 3:12-13 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be

dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (KJV)

3. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO LOOK UP: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CLOSES OUR EYES. This should develop an Expectant Life; Live Purely 2 Peter 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (KJV)
4. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO STUDY THE BOOK: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CROWDS OUT OUR BIBLES. This should help us to Guard our heart and encourage us to Live maturely 2 Peter 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. (KJV)
5. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO OBEY JESUS: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CORRODES OUR WILLS. This should encourage us to Grow Spiritually and to Live Growingly 2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (KJV)

What drives God's servants to make such sacrifices? Devotion to Christ. And devotion sacrifices!

PRAY FOR THEM TO LEARN DIVINE PRIORITIES.

- GOD WANTS US FRUITFUL: Matthew 13:22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (NKJV)
- GOD WANTS NO EXCUSES: Luke 14:16-24 Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 "and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' 18 "But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' 19 "And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 "Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 "So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' 22 "And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 "Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 'For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' " (NKJV)
- GOD WANTS US UNENTANGLED: 2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. (NKJV)