

Commitment? Who, Me?

In his book *The Closing of the American Mind* Allan Bloom claims that "young people today are afraid of making commitments:" Is he right? Relativism is the unchallenged assumption of much modern thought. Almost anything goes in our modern society except beliefs (like Christianity) held by those who take truth and conviction seriously. And many people who claim to have a faith simply say that it is irrelevant to their life as it conflicts with their lifestyle. They want to have a religion on their own terms.

Harold Fallding sums up the dilemma presented by relativism:

What was right for another time and place is not necessarily right for now. What is right for another person is not necessarily right for me. What was right for me last time is not necessarily right for now. It all depends on the situation.

Christians have also been effected. Some ask, "How can I honestly commit myself to God and His purposes for my life and the world without denying the complexities, the dangers, and the uncertainties of life?" But the Christian faith has never been simple. Questions have always been asked. Throughout the history of the Church, Christian philosophers and theologians have struggled with them. When one attempts a life of commitment questions do not disappear, but they no longer preoccupy our thought.

The key to commitment is the exercise of the will. The apostle Peter wrote that faith is obedience to truth (1 Peter 1:22). Commitment to truth has always been the hallmark of the Christian faith. The truth Christians are committed to is truth personified in Christ (Jn. 14:6). We cannot be both committed and uncommitted. Christ calls His followers to live out their faith in every facet of their lives. Such a level of commitment frequently leads to tension and stress. And Christians cannot expect everyone to appreciate their faith commitment. But they are not out to win a popularity contest.

Os Guinness rightly says that no conviction is truly our own unless we are prepared to hold it even if all men are against it. This note of conviction is evident in Biblical faith. The apostle Paul wrote from his prison cell: "I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). The writer of Hebrews spoke of "a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1). They included men and women of faith. From Abel to Noah to Abraham to Moses to Ruth and beyond we find total commitment to God as a common denominator. The history of the church has known its martyrs. Opponents of Christianity disliked Christians who were wholeheartedly committed to their Lord. "Their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished," wrote the Younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, c. A.D. 112.

It takes commitment to follow the Lord in a secular environment that often challenges our faith and sometimes ridicules it. This is not a time for halfhearted Christians. When

the going gets tough Christians must be sure of their loyalty to Jesus. The Reformer Martin Luther's (1483-1546) warning is still relevant for today:

Bear in mind, then, that when you face death or persecution, I cannot be with you, or you with me. Every man must then fight for himself.

Yet, our God is with us always, if we remain in Him.

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