

apture: Proverbs 16.

Theme: Committed to What?

Text: Proverbs 16:3... "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established".

Date prepared:

Notes... Nov. 7, 1964

Preached Nov. 8, 1964, & this taken from recording.

Dates and places used:

Nov. 8, 1964, Montrose, Colo. 8:30  
& 11:00 a.m.

COVER 1958

Christians: Proverbs 10.

Themes: Committed to Christ

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Verse: Proverbs 10:1-3

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Notes and class notes

Nov. 8, 1964, Montrose, Colo. 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.

In our nation's society, I suppose that if each of us paid any attention to every special week that is set aside we would have about 204 weeks a year, or something like that. Sometimes it seems to preachers that we are asked to observe special days, special emphases about 204 times a year.

Today is one of those times, and we didn't show it on the bulletin but it is what is called "Commitment Day", an outgrowth of the old "Temperance Day" that we used to observe; which was the time when we tried to get people to pledge not to use alcoholic beverages. This purpose was worthy, and we certainly are in favor of it. We believe in abstinence from their use. However, sometimes the emphasis was purely negative.

We thought that today we would use this term "commitment", which is the term we use for the day, and see what it means; because in any discussion we ought to define what we are saying. If you are a person who calls yourself a liberal in your social and political philosophy, what do you mean by the

In our nation's society, I suppose that the fact of us paying attention to every special week that is set aside, we would have about 504 weeks a year, or something like that. Sometimes it seems to professors that we are asked to observe special days, special expenses about 504 times a year.

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I thought that today we would use this term "commitment", which is the term we use for the day, and see what it means; because in any discussion we ought to define what we are saying. If you are a person who calls yourself a liberal in your social and political philosophy, what do you mean by the

"liberal"? Define it. Don't just use the other word "conservative" as a bad word. If you are a person who considers yourself a conservative, the same holds true. When you are using a term, know what you mean by the term with which you disagree.

Let's define this word "Commitment" today, and recognize, like with many words, that there are many definitions. We won't touch on all of them by any means, but some. The word "commitment" comes, of course, from the verb "commit". This verb has many meanings. One of them is "to confine"; and the word "confine" has many meanings.

We confine something for preservation; we commit it for preservation. Such as a thought. Maybe you commit it to writing or to printing, or you may commit it to memory; so that you understand and preserve it.

Then there is this thing of confining something, of putting it away, for safekeeping; committing it to storage, or what not. There is the thing of confining or committing for

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or consigning for destruction; such as confining or committing garbage to the dumb or trash to the flames; or in the burial service we say, "We therefore commit his body to its final resting place". It is there forever, finally, supposedly.

We use the term sometimes when speaking of putting people in institutions. We confine, commit, a person to a penal institution; or perhaps to a mental institution.

Another use of this word "commit" is to use it to speak of doing something. When a person perpetrates a crime we say he "commits a crime". He does something. When he does something worthwhile, sometimes we say "he committed the deed"; he did it. Another usage of the word is that which is meant when we speak of putting something in trust. We commit funds to a bank; we commit the execution of an estate to an administrator or an executor. Still another meaning of this word "commit" is that of pledging or binding ourselves. We promise something, we commit ourselves to a course of action.

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Usually, this is the meaning which is used on temperance day, commitment day, when we commit ourselves not to do something. Commitment: a pledge, a promise; to do something, not to do something.

There are some elements that stand out in all of these meanings of the word "commitment". One of them is the element of action, the element of doing something. This seems to me to be one of the universal elements of the word. Another meaning of the word "commit" or "commitment" is a promise or a pledge, a determination, to do something; not only doing it, of course, but before that the determination, the pledge or the promise.

There are other meanings of the word, but these will suffice for what we want this morning.

In Christian worship, of course, a discussion of any topic should be from a christian viewpoint. We should try, perhaps, to consider alternatives to the Christian way, to the Christian viewpoint. We should try to show why the Christian way is superior; because

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if we didn't believe that, we wouldn't be here in worship, using this particular form of doing things. Certainly if we believe the Christian way and view is superior, we should try to urge people to do something about it; to commit themselves to doing something.

Well, if we seek commitment, then, in this matter of Christian living, this matter of Christian attitudes, commitment to what? To what is your life committed?

There are many ordinary, daily forms of commitment. One of them is marriage. I had the pleasure of officiating at a marriage last night in a home. I always enjoy this when it seems that the couple are well<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> matched. These two have made a commitment.

We were studying this past week, with a group of the Woman's Society, the Book of Genesis. This, which we enjoyed, and will be doing with one of the other church school classes. We have done it with the Yams and

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Yagos class, and will be doing it with the Janes and Joes. In this class we were talking about the story of Jacob; who saw Rachel at the well, drawing water, and fell deeply in love with her. He made a deal with Laban, her father, that he would work for him for seven years, after which Rachel would be given to him as his wife. You remember how Laban tricked him, and gave to him Leah, the older, not-anywhere-nearly-so-good-looking daughter; because it was easy to get by with with all the veils and robes they wore in those days. Of course, he found it out! And then he was angry about it; so Laban made the deal with him that "you can marry Rachel within the next week, but you've got to work for her seven years yet, too. After all, you've gained two wives. We made the comment that really Jacob was lucky. He only worked seven years for each wife. Most of us have to work a lifetime for one.

But marriage is a commitment. It is a commitment to love, to loyalty, to fidelity, to work, even to suffer-

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ing for each other. It is a matter of give and take; and it takes a lot of forgiveness, sometimes, to forgive each other, and to get accustomed to each other's idiosyncracies, and so on. It's a pledge, it's a commitment, and then years of acting in good faith. We had, I've told you, the pleasure of seeing my parents celebrate their Golden Wedding anniversary a few weeks ago. It was a real pleasure. And yet, as in any home, I can remember things which if I told you here and it got back to them I'd never get to go home again. But every family has these things. The thing that counts is not that disturbances come up, misunderstanding and differences. It's how you handle them; the commitment to go through with this thing for life. That is a basic commitment. Some people make it more quickly than they make the commitment to buy a house or a car. They spend a lot more time deciding which house or which car they want, than which wife they want. And yet one for life and the other is going to wear out in a few years. That's the usual way. Commitments are

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important.

We have to make commitments in the area of work. Once you have become committed to what you want to do, you get some decision as to the type of work you want to do, you've got to train for it. If you don't, you're not going to have much chance of working, if the social prognosis is right. We're going to find it, as it is developing now, more and more true that the untrained man has a hard time getting work. This is necessary, this commitment to training for a job to which you want to commit yourself. The more training you have, formal education or technical training, the better today. Once you have entered upon the job, you've got to commit yourself to a philosophy and a way of doing it. Are you out to get all that you can, the highest rate of profit at any cost; giving shoddy workmanship, and cheating on the time? Or are you interested in the welfare of the boss and the customers? Really, in the long run, of course, the one who is interested in the welfare of his boss or his customers is the one who gets the most business and builds

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the best job security. The most selfish way is the way which is least selfish.

You make commitments in community living. You commit yourself to either participating in community activities or not participating. Most of you who are here are here because you are committed to Christian worship, participation in Christian church activities. Some of you are very active in many other organizations, because you feel that the PTA, the Lodges, the Service Clubs, the many other activities of the community are worthwhile. None of us, I suppose can participate in all of the activities of a community, but each certainly should do some, and be active in several cooperative community activities. This is what you can do, or you can say "I don't have the time" and you can not force yourself to be outgoing; withdraw; not gain from what the community has to offer for yourself, nor offer what you have for the community. No matter what you think, you have something to offer!

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We are committed in this matter of politics, As we've said, to the liberal or the conservative viewpoint; and it's very important why we are, and what the word means. Certainly, as in all other areas, your political viewpoint should be based, to the best of your ability, upon what you think are Christian attitudes.

We are committed in what we say, in the manner of speech. I've known people, you know them, who can't utter a sentence without getting a profane word or an indecent word in it, it seems. And when they try real hard to clean it up for a special occasion, it almost invariably sneaks in at a time when it embarrasses them and everybody else. This is a commitment which is made early in life. You just slide into the indecent, profane, careless ways of speaking; the habit grows, and it's hard to break. But if you make a commitment early in life to speak only the clean language, nice words, the concise sentence, and so on, you certainly are building habits which make you more acceptable in any circles. Indecency in language

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shows a lack of respect for ones bodily functions, a lack of respect for God, a lack of respect for others.

Commitments are made, of course, in avocations, and recreation. When you are away on a convention, on a vacation, do you keep the standards of morality which you hold up so highly in the community? This is a pretty good test. On a hunting trip, do you do things which you wouldn't dare do if you were in town and your wife was around you? I mentioned that there was a doctor's convention once (I read this somewhere--it's a true account); and most of the doctors were so well lubricated with alcohol that one of them, who was a little bit less so, looked around and said, "My God, what if somebody gets sick? Well, this is the type of thing which is the test. Do we carry our commitment to a way and an attitude of life to places where we play; where we don't think anybody will know us?"

It's obvious then, that if we commit ourselves in every area of life to Christian ways, we are better off.

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Here are the guidelines, then. For those of us who are Christian, the guidelines are those which we find in the Bible. We must turn, again, for guidelines in committing ourselves to the sourcebook of our faith, to the Bible. The Scriptural guidelines we use today are from this book from which we read, from Proverbs the sixteenth chapter. This gives us several different thoughts which I'm going to regroup here, as I've read it and understood it.

There is first, of course, the type of commitment which we can make, which is commitment to myself. Commitment to get the most I can for myself.

Commitment to pleasure seeking only. Well, the Bible, and this particular part of it, has something to say about that. Listen to verse 8. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenue with injustice."

Or, listen to verse 18. "Pride goeth before destruction; and a haughty spirit before a fall". Or, verse 25.

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because all of us rationalize what we do. What we do, we defend as being right, regardless of what it is. Sometimes we are correct, and sometimes we aren't. We are fooling ourselves. "There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but its end is the way of death".

We would point, since this is Commitment Day, with its emphasis on the harm of alcohol, to the use of alcohol; to the 5 million or more alcoholics; to the ..what is it?.. 60 to 80 million people who drink socially. Probably over half of you do. None of you think you're going to become an alcoholic, but some of you will. You don't know whether you're it or not. You are dealing with a thing in which you are haughty. You can control it. This is what everyone of the people on skid row, on Larimer Street in Denver and elsewhere have said, in the past: "I can handle my liquor." But they don't. Well, this is the type of thing.

Think of the education on smoking

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habits and the damage which smoking does, which we have received recently. For a while after the figures came out there was a drop in the sale of tobacco products. Now, I understand, it is going back up. We really aren't creatures of the mind, are we? We are creatures of emotion. We do what we feel like doing, and be hanged with what the mind tells us. Unless we are motivated by a love of God, a desire to please Him, an emotion which is deep and real because it is based both upon reason and upon God-given concepts, reason won't carry us through. We slip back into bad habits, regardless of what our mind tells us.

Verse 33 here says "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord". Remember, in ancient days, as in some of the Oriental countries today, men and women alike wore robes. When they were visiting with each other, they didn't usually sit on chairs. They squatted. In squatting, the robe could be stretched over the knees and be tucked under the feet,

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in such a way that it actually made a real nice little table. Gamblers didn't have to find smooth ground or a platform somewhere to cast their dice. They could cast them on their robe laps. "The lot is cast into the lap; but, the decision is wholly with the Lord". This says that once the dice have left the hand, the gambler has no control. It may be that if you are gambling foolishly, if you are taking chances, risk without cause, without giving service to others, that the decision is wholly with the Lord would mean that in the mind of the Psalmist that you are simply casting the lot into destruction.

Well, here are some of the reasons why, as the writer of the Proverbs sees it, as our common everyday experience points out, it is dangerous to commit yourself to doing your own way in finding pleasure.

Then, there is the second commitment you can make. Commitment to service, to service of other people, pleasing others. There are two

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verses here which we might read together. "The wise of heart is called a man of discernment; and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness". That's the 21st verse. The 23rd: "The mind of the wise makes his speech judicious; and adds persuasiveness to his lips". Discernment and judiciousness. Being able to discern what is good, what is proper, what is thoughtful for the other man, what is right. Judiciousness in not praising anyone too much, in not going overboard in any area of life. Pleasantness: being nice to people in the words of your lips. These are the things which will cause others to like you, if that's what you're after; but also which will serve them best. Then, verse 30 has another thing brought to our thought. "He who winks his eyes plans perverse things. He who compresses his lips brings evil to pass". When a boy winks at a girl, he doesn't have to say anything. She knows what he means, or vice versa. They wink at the boys more now, don't they? Defend yourselves outside of church, girls. But, the wink often is a

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symbols of knowledge which you're not expressing. If you go in somewhere where things are going on which you probably don't approve, but ~~which~~ you wink at somebody, the wink ~~index~~ ~~index~~ essence says, "We know this is going on, but let's act like we don't see it," you see. Isn't this right? This is, I believe, what the writer is saying. "He who winks his eyes plans perverse things". By winking we say "Let's don't quit, because we may get some fun out of that", you see. And then, "he who compresses his lips brings evil to pass". The same thought: when you are aware of something that is going to come about, press ~~ness~~ to bring about something that is wrong, and say nothing, compress your lips and keep quiet, don't oppose it, you are a partner in the doing thereof. You cannot abstain from fighting evil, when you could fight it, and not be as guilty of it as the person who brings it about. This is the thought of the Proverb writer.

Commitment to serving and pleasing others. One other verse. "He who is slow to anger is better than the

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mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city". As a person with a tendency to a hot temper, I can appreciate that. And yet I know that when I keep it under control, and have, that usually things come out far better than they possibly could when I let it go. You know that from your own experience. Here is an ancient expression of that truth. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city".

On this commitment day, here is one of the big arguments against the use of intoxicants, because they release the inhibitions, so that a person flares up more quickly, if he has that tendency. He becomes more depressed and mean and ugly if he has that tendency. He says things without thinking, and without any control whatsoever. Or does things which are damaging, perhaps even murderous. Again and again, if you read the papers, the murders,  $\frac{1}{2}$  the crimes of all sorts which are committed, are committed by persons who first have been drinking.

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Perhaps moderately, as we say, but who have first been drinking. If the papers were as frank with that one statistic~~x~~ as police tell us they should be, probably the percentage of crimes for which people are arrested and prosecuted would go up as high as 75% directly related to alcohol. But, again, you resist this, perhaps, because our minds don't like to accept anything which knocks something we like.

Commitment to self-advancement, pleasure, regardless of what happens to anybody else, is one way of motivating our lives, one thing to which we commit ourselves. Commitment to serving and pleasing others: this is another.

There is even a higher. That, of course is commitment to God's way. In the second verse of this 16th chapter of Proverbs, the writer says, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit". We don't need to preach about that. It's obvious. The other verse, the 3rd verse,

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IS OUR text for today. It says, "Commit~~x~~ your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established".

Well, we've talked about various ways in which we can commit ourselves, various attitudes and philosophies to which our lives may be committed. Everybody needs some purpose in life, some commitment. For some~~x~~ people, the purpose is just to take the best care of their children and give them the best service they can. This is higher than just being selfish. For some, it's just "number one": "I'm going to have a good time, I'm gong to make my pile, and if you get in the way I'll push you out of it". For others, it is serving the others because the~~x~~ others are the children of God.

Certainly, if we are drifting, if we are the type of people who wonder what we are going to do with our spare time, we have too much spare time. Drifting, time on the hands, is horrible, and leads to meaninglessness, and to mischief.

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There are, as we have said, these forms of commitment. What about you? Commitment to what? What about me? It's something we need to think about frequently.

This last month, in our mailer we mailed to you, in our church paper, this little card, "Methodists Believe in Abstinence". On the inside, the big words "Commitment Day", and three columns. Let me read them.

"The FAMILY circle is a school for living. It defines moral values and nourishes the faith of its members. Decisions made in the family best survive social pressures." α

Now there are some of these cards in your pew racks, perhaps, There aren't many left, but there may be some. If you want one to take home, well for goodness sakes, help yourself to them. We'll throw them out after this service if you don't.

"Alcohol offers nothing to the Christian family. Where the love

There are, as we have said, three forms of commitment. What about you? Commitment to what? What about me? This something we need to think about presently.

This last month, in our earlier we mailed to you, in our church paper, this little card, "Methodists Believe in Commitment". On the inside, the big words "Commitment Day", and three columns. Let me read them.

"The family circle is a school for living. It defines moral values and nourishes the faith of its members. Decisions made in the family best survive social pressures."

Now there are some of these cards in your post boxes, perhaps, here a card may be left, but there may be some. If you want one to take home, will the goodness please, help yourself to them. We'll throw them out after this service if you don't.

"Alcohol offers nothing to the Christian family. Where the love

of Christ reigns the pseudo-fellowship of social drinking has no place. Secure in God's love the Christian family seeks no alcoholic anaesthesia. In time of crisis its members find strength in God and the Christian community."

And then the third column: "Alcohol destroys families. Many family break-ups involve alcohol. The family of the alcoholic suffers years of heart-break. This family commitment is an expression of concern for the victims of a senseless social custom"

On the back: "A Family Covenant". "As an expression of our love for each other and our concern for others, we, the members of the Family Circle, God helping us, hereby commit ourselves to abstinence, and dedicate our hearts to creative fellowship and Christian service".

We are not asking you to do a thing publicly here. We are suggesting that you talk this thing over in your families. As you become convinced that this is a good step,

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sign the card, all of the family, and put it where you can see it, as a reminder of your step.

This is not just a negative thing but it is to set the tone of the family on the highest plane. The key word in that middle column, was "security in God's love". "Security in God's love", for the whole family; just as little children, even if punished at times, and feeling threatened by the  $\frac{1}{2}$  punishment, nevertheless, generally are secure in the family love. This is the emphasis.

Commitment in one thing, but the spirit of Christ, as best you can express it, in that thing. xj

As our text, Proverbs 16:3, puts it, "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." Works committed to God are not selfish. They are for Him, they are for other people, because, the other people are his children, and through them you hope to serve and to please him. Works which we

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should commit to the Lord are all that we do: our thoughts, our words, our deeds. "Commit your work to the Lord," because happiness, self-confidence, long-range and eternal success come as you do it.

### Prayer

God, Our Father, we are grateful for the wisdom of old, in Proverbs from which we have read. May we, as is urged there, and as common sense urges us, and as the impulse of our hearts tells us, commit ourselves to Thee. In this commitment, may we put aside useless habits, which cost money for nothing, which bring harm to the body, which deny that we are temples of the Lord. In this commitment, may we constantly, through prayer, study, fellowship and worship, seek Thy way, and then do it. In the name of Christ our Savior, Amen.

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