

A COSTLY COMMITMENT

Joshua 24

"4 score & 7 years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation..."

In his Gettysburg address, Lincoln reminds us of initial commitment made by founders of our country

Their commitment was being tested:

Could a nation, "so conceived & so dedicated"

–committed to things our nation was committed to—could such a nation long endure?

Their commitment—and Lincoln's question—cause me to **look both directions** as it relates to God's people:

–back to people of God in **Joshua's day**,

–ahead to people of God in **our day**.

Can people so conceived & dedicated endure for long in culture moving a different direction?

Our society is characterized by rejection (or avoidance) of commitment:

Job Market 60 yrs ago Sears insisted on career commitment from management entrants.

5 yrs later idea was dropped—no 1 was keeping the commitment anyway.

No 1 expects lifetime commitment any more

–most people make 3 major career changes

College students change majors average of 5 X

"Try it out. If it fits, stay with it.

When it no longer satisfies, try something else."

Marriage—People avoid marriage; they don't want permanent commitment.

Among those who do marry—even Christians—we no longer expect marriage to be permanent

Church attendance "I'll go while I'm satisfied."

As long as our needs are met we stay.

"When I stop getting what I need, I'm out of here!"

Younger generations—short commitments & church hopping. "Today we want this; next week we want something different."

Spiritually—People have same attitude about God.

Go to church. Trust Jesus as Savior. Enjoy life.

Don't get fanatical—no permanent commitment

COMMITMENT IS COSTLY

Therefore, commitment has become 4-letter word.

We live in **commitment-avoiding** society

We think that's modern! **Israel was frequently a commitment-avoiding society.**

They sat on fence regarding God.

They want to worship Yahweh;

have Him around when they need Him;

But want other gods around too—just in case!

They don't want **commitment to Him alone.**

In **marriage**, escape clause was added

because of hard hearts of the people.

In **daily living** in general,

they did whatever they "*felt like*" doing.

Josh. speaks to commitment-avoiding society

in Josh. 24—represents his **Last Words.**

Famous last words—tell what's important to speaker.

Joshua calls God's people to commit themselves to follow the Lord (YHWH)

Get off the fence!

Make commitment: to follow God & live His way **The Call 14-15** *"Fear the Lord & serve him in sin-cerity & in faithfulness. Put away the gods your fathers served beyond the River & in Egypt, & serve the Lord. ¹⁵If it's evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me & my house, we'll serve the Lord"*

2-fold call:

Call to proper attitude => Reverence

Recognize Who God is & His right to rule our lives

Call to proper action => Obedience

Obey & serve Him—loyalty to Him alone

Make a commitment, 1 way or the other:

follow God, or

follow gods of pagans around you,

but *get off the fence!*

Their Response 16-18 *"The people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods,"¹⁷for it is the Lord our God who brought us & our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, & who did those great signs in our sight & preserved us in all the way that we went, & among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸The Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."*

"We will serve Yahweh!"

A decision most of us have already made.

We recognize Him as God of the universe

We reverence Him

We've made decision to serve & worship Him

Notice **Joshua's reaction to their response:**

19-22 *"Joshua said to the people, "You aren't able to serve the Lord, for he's a holy God. He's a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰If you forsake the Lord & serve foreign gods, then he will turn & do you harm & consume you, after having done you good."²¹The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord."²²Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you've chosen the Lord, to serve him." & they said, "We're witnesses."*

Joshua's reaction confuses the evangelist in me!

Today we praise the Lord, count hands, & pass decision cards!

Joshua makes 2 very negative replies:

1. You can't do it! 19-21

The cost is too great. God's demands are costly.

The decision shouldn't be made lightly.

2. "You're witnesses against yourselves"

=> "that you've chosen to serve Yahweh."

NOT that they reject Him.

But that they made a commitment to Him.

How would this witness AGAINST them?

Wouldn't this be *positive*?

Joshua's warning them about cost of commitment

Josh. establishes principle that commitment to God's a serious matter 19-22

The price is high. It shouldn't be made lightly!

Finally, when they reaffirm their commitment...

Joshua challenges God's people to get on with it!—to live according to their decision

23-24 "He said, 'Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, & incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.'" ²⁴ "The people said to Joshua, 'The Lord our God we will serve; his voice we will obey.'"

Commitment's always 2-sided issue:

—to abandon other things; —cling to our commitment

1. Neg.—put aside something, turn from old ways

2. Pos.—give yourself to something

In marriage, forsaking all others, faithful to 1 only

1. Neg. — Get rid of foreign gods

2. Pos. — Turn to Yahweh, God of Israel

Bible's filled with exx. & warnings on both sides:

commitment is costly. It's not to be taken lightly!

Neg. Warnings:

Danger of Not Surrendering Everything

1. Saul — Bright start: **1 Sam. 10:1, 6-7, 9, 24**

Sad end: Caused by few occasions of disobedience

Apparently insignificant issues—always justifiable!

He's rejected due to choices; experiences sad end

2. N.T. => Ananias & Sapphira Acts 5

Brought great offering to church on Sunday!

Sold property, gave part to the Lord

All they did was tell little lie about the total price

They're dead! —Aren't we glad God doesn't do that

You can't play games with God & survive!

Pos. examples & exhortations: serve God

1. Commitment to follow Jesus is costly

2. Commitment to follow Jesus cost Peter everything Jn. 21:15-19

3. Commitment to follow Jesus may cost US everything we have. 2 Tim. 2:3-14a

Are WE ready to pay that price?

Our commitment-avoiding society is not!

God, like marines, is calling: "A few good people!

"Give me an army of committed people;

I'll turn the world upside down!"

God calls us to surrender everything;

commit our lives into His hands.

"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...

But as for me & my family we will serve the Lord."

GOD IS CALLING US TO COMMITMENT!

For Israel, the choice was clear!

They had to decide **which god** they would serve

One of the pagan gods in their neighborhood?

Or Yahweh, the God of Israel?
That won't be OUR issue!

Few of *US* have to choose from list of gods in our neighborhood!

Joshua had already demonstrated *his* commitment Ex. 24:13; 33:11

WE may have to face a different choice!

What are we going to live for?

Career or God? Popularity/attention?

Money/ things? Pleasure? Family? OR, **GOD?**

What will that commitment look like in OUR life?

*"Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served... or the gods of those in whose land you dwell. But **as for me** & my house, we will serve the Lord."*

Jeremías & Elsa—*"only 2 things are important to me!*

What's most important thing in the world to US?

Are WE willing to place it in God's hands?

Are we willing to make a TOTAL commitment of all we are & have, of our life—OUR family—to God?

What's the issue in our life?

Will we say, "Alright God, I know the price is high.

But I'm ready to make a permanent commitment!

I surrender everything and give my

life to you."

To go **back to Lincoln's question**: Can a nation so conceived & so dedicated endure for long?

Greater question this a.m. concerns God's people:

Having been so conceived & so dedicated, will WE endure in culture headed different direction?

Back to Joshua's question: Whom will we serve?

Will we serve same things our culture—without God—serves?

Will we serve ourselves—our interests?

Or, **will we serve the Lord?**

Joshua made permanent, irrevocable commitment.

Like marriage—permanent, irrevocable commitment.

23:8—*"Hold fast to the LORD your God!"*

Joshua committed to be permanently glued to God!

Are we with God, or with gods of modern culture?

Future of our church will depend on whose will we're committed to follow.

Are we committed to pursue God's agenda, or ours?

Moses' last words: Trust the Lord & obey Him

Our Lord's prayer: Not MY will but yours be done

"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...

AS FOR ME and my family we will serve the Lord!"