

Sermon Transcript from 10th August 2025 – Total Commitment

References: Numbers 27:15-23, Luke 9:51-62, Galatians 5

Sermon TLDR

This sermon, titled "**No Half Measures**," advocates for total commitment in the Christian faith, exploring what this entails through three main sections. Firstly, it examines **Moses as an Old Testament example** of commitment, discussing his leadership qualities and foresight in appointing a successor. Secondly, the speaker addresses **how individuals respond to Jesus's call**, contrasting enthusiastic but uncalculating followers with those who offer excuses, ultimately emphasising that true commitment means living a transformed life without reservation. Finally, the sermon delves into **the concept of freedom in Christ**, differentiating spiritual freedom from political or self-indulgent freedoms, and concluding that this genuine freedom, reflected in the "fruit of the Spirit," is the ultimate expression of Christian commitment.

Link to the Start of the Sermon (on YouTube)

Part 1 - <https://youtu.be/3N1MOvY4ZO0?t=1412>

Part 2 - <https://youtu.be/3N1MOvY4ZO0?t=3104>

Sermon Transcript

PART 1

Good morning everybody. It's good to be here again and welcome obviously to those who are watching online now or might be watching us later on.

Our theme today is total commitment no half measures. Total commitment and no half measures.

We're going to try to unpack that theme and see if it helps us to understand our role as a Christian. And so I'm going to do it in three sections. The first section is to find out and use an example from the of somebody who had total commitment or did they? The second one is going to be about how we and others have responded to the call of Jesus. What does commitment look like? What is our response? And then the third part is going to be looking at freedom. What does that mean? And how can the Holy Spirit notice there's an error there.

There's an S on fruit when there shouldn't be because we look at the fruit of the spirit as singular.

So, there are the three sections that we're going to look at today. Sometimes I think it's good for us to look back at a particular event or a person in the Old Testament. And this helps to appreciate the fact for us there is nothing new about our challenge today.

So, what can we learn today from the Old Testament about total commitment?

I've chosen one person who I think you will know. So here it is. What do you know about Moses? I could have chosen Elijah or Abraham to name but a few. I'd like you now because most of you are sitting well not quite of sitting in in groups but have a little chat. Can you amongst yourselves [share] what you know about Moses? Anything? Just have a little chat will you?

So, the question of course is that are you talking about Moses or happen to have You happen to sort of be talking about other things at the same time like you we know in school very well. Tell me then anything about Moses.

Yes. Grace - ten commandments. Yes. Presented the ten commandments. Good. One strong point there. Another one.

He was in the right place at the right time.

He was at the right place at the right time. Do you think he had a long nose though?

Because I think he got himself involved in quite a lot of conflicts and he didn't always do the right thing at the right time. We'll find about anymore. Anything else?

What happened when he was a baby?

He wasn't meant to live.

Right? Yes.

Yes. Yes. Absolutely. Anything else? Yes.

Well, look, these are what I found which will confirm some of the things.

He was put in a basket floated we think possibly in the Nile and of course it was to protect him because babies at that stage were going to be killed by the Egyptians.

When he was older, he responded to conflicts as we know we mentioned.

Let's just see what the next one might be - burning bush experience. Do you remember that? Yes. That's a thought, isn't it? Served as a buffer between God and the people. We have a lot of people in the Old Testament that that was their role, wasn't it?

Yes. Obedience to God suddenly, not always, disqualified him from entering the promised land. Think about that, right? Prophet, lawgiver, recorder of the ten commandments has all been mentioned. And is there anything else? Author of the Pentateuch or the Torah. That's the first five books of the Old Testament. You can use both words for that there.

Total commitment and then I put not quite concern that the work he had done for God would be lost without somebody taking over. And then finally, we should ask not what should I change into, but how should I use my own abilities and strengths to do your will?

So, what can we learn from the Old Testament about total commitment?

And uh Wendy's going to come and read some verses from the book of Numbers about for somebody to take over from him and that was Joshua.

[Wendy reads Numbers 27:15-23]

¹⁵ Moses said to the Lord, ¹⁶ "May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community ¹⁷ to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

¹⁸ So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership,[a] and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹ Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. ²⁰ Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. ²¹ He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in."

²² Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. ²³ Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses.

So just to think about just quickly those few verses.

So, God asked Moses asked God to appoint a leader and one who could lead them into battle and also to care for them. And the Lord responded with Joshua.

Many people want to be leaders in our time and obviously in that time. Some can be very capable of reaching their goals, but quite often at the expense of other people and have a little think about that while others care deeply for the people in their charge.

So, the best leaders really are goal orientated, and people orientated.

What would you say about the commitment of Moses to God and the work He did. He thought ahead. He thought ahead about a replacement for him which would fur it which it shows further commitment of Moses wanting God's work to continue.

He did not want to leave without a new leader in place.

And once Joshua was put in place, he was given various tasks to do. It's [a] fairly easy task as a as a transitional point. And there were some good displays of confidence by Moses in Joshua's ability.

So perhaps we as individuals can take a page out of Moses book and make sure that people are trained to carry on their duties.

We are told to follow Moses pattern of pray, select, develop, and commission.

READINGS

Luke 9:51-62

Samaritan Opposition

⁵¹ As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then he and his disciples went to another village.

The Cost of Following Jesus

⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

⁵⁸ Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

⁵⁹ He said to another man, "Follow me."

But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

⁶¹ Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

⁶² Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Freedom in Christ

⁵ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Life by the Spirit

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

PART 2

Can I, or can you, remember who was pivotal in helping you to make the decision to follow Jesus. Let's have a little think about it. Who was it that was the person that really sparked that interest?

Looking back, do you think it was difficult to start out as a Christian? Do you think it might be harder now to commit as a Christian than it was um in the years ago and some of you of course committed yourselves many many years ago or do you think it might be about the same?

You may not be sure whether it was difficult for you but once you've committed your life to Jesus then that's when the going can get tough. We need the strength to persevere, don't we?

And that strength comes from the Holy Spirit if we allow that Holy Spirit into us into our lives and then we listen to what it has to say.

So, in that Luke reading this morning, what do you think about the people who talked with Jesus when he asked them to follow him? Let's look at the different ways people approached Jesus's call.

We discover from that reading from Luke that Jesus knew he would be facing persecution and death in Jerusalem. But he was determined at this stage to go to Samaria, a Samaritan village. He had been very much rejected by a lot of Jews as we know, and he wanted to bring the Gentiles on board as it were.

The commitment of Jesus to carry out his father's will we see here. And this kind of resolve by Jesus should perhaps characterize our lives in our total commitment to God. So, when God gives us a course of action, we must move steadily towards whatever destination that might be, remembering that Jesus is the alpha, omega, the beginning and the finisher.

No matter what potential hazards await us there, we have that commitment to serve. Other people we find in this Luke reading are called to follow Jesus but not everyone was prepared to do that.

Jesus, remember, was not welcomed there in that Samaritan village but on the other hand there were some people that incredibly enthusiastic about it that welcomed him and offered to come with him immediately.

But Jesus having that ability to know people only too well what human nature was like had to dampen and some of their enthusiasm by bringing them down to earth and saying to them there's a cost issue of commitment before they have to decide.

Then perhaps they had to consider the practical living arrangements of following him for instance probably the lack of home comforts the practical things that needed to be looked at squarely in the face before the choice is made to get up and follow Jesus.

We also read in that Luke reading those people who responded to Jesus in a somewhat negative way. Lord said one of them first let me bury my father and another said I will follow you but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.

We of course don't know the full details about uh about these people, but we do know that Jesus said let the dead bury their own dead and no one who puts their hand to the plough and looks back is fit to serve in the kingdom of God.

What we know is that Jesus requires some instant action from us.

What is important here that Jesus did not teach people to forsake their responsibilities to family but he often gave commands to people in the light of what he saw was their real motive. In other words, he knew what they were thinking underneath what they actually said.

Of course, it wasn't everybody's calling to wander with Jesus around the countryside and preaching and healing the sick or even become, as we would call them, missionaries.

Equally valid, of course, is our ministry of chatting about the good news um of Jesus amongst our own people in our own community here. This [is] a fact, of course is LFC's mission field, isn't it? Let's be honest.

But we should also consider if we are influencers. Are you an influencer?

I wonder if we have that opportunity of influencing people. Then I think that we might look at how we are living by God's values and in effect how we could be for the greater good of the country and so how can we affect and influence the people that might be in positions of authority for instance in the end what binds all these people together is their decision to make their commitment to God.

So what does God want from us total commitment, not half-hearted commitment.

We can't pick and choose. The Bible is not multiple-choice. Once you've made your commitment, making that commitment of following Jesus, there is no getting away from the fact that we are committed to living our lives differently.

Which brings us into the last reading that we had from Galatians. And in Galatians, Paul gives a very very powerful message about a freedom in Christ and the importance of us walking by the spirit.

That means reflecting the character of Christ in our thoughts, in our words, and in any actions that we have living as a committed Christians as committed Christians. We all need to check constantly that we are still walking in step with the spirit.

Paul gives us a whole list of examples to check our behaviour in this passage so that we can adjust our direction accordingly. Here we find contrasts between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. And he emphasizes the transformation power of the Holy Spirit in believers lives.

It was important to include the first verse from Galatians before we moved on to the other verses because it says “for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” [*Galatians 5:1*]

We might under act that in a minute what that means.

Christ died to set us free from sin and from the long list of laws and regulations that there were at that time. Setting us free was not giving us freedom to do what we want because that would lead us back into the slavery to our selfish desires. I think that we can all agree that freedom is a very important word particularly in our world today. It's an important word and concept in our country, isn't it?

But it is also a controversial word as well because we do not always agree with what freedom really means or what it really looks like. But I think we can all agree that it is vitally important for each one of us.

Freedom is also an important word in the Bible.

The defining event, for instance, of the Old Testament in the freeing of God's people from slavery in Egypt.

And in the New Testament, the defining event is the freeing of God's people from slavery to sin, death, and evil.

And in today's third reading from Galatians, we have one of the most well-known passages in the New Testament about freedom. And that's this sometimes this passage is called the epistle of freedom.

So, what does freedom mean to us as Christians?

There are three freedoms that have been described by Martin Luther. Now I'm not talking about Martin Luther King the American. I'm talking about Martin Luther of the 16th century. We find that Martin Luther wrote a lot about this subject about freedom and how it relates to us in our Christian lives.

One of his famous works is actually called the freedom of the Christian. And in Luther's commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, he also offers some important insights into the nature of our freedom. Writing on this passage, he asks and answers a very simple but important question. What is freedom?

And Luther goes on to remind us that there are at least three different types of freedom. And I just want to mention these three this morning.

The first is political freedom. This is often when we think of when we think about freedom. It is why we are we can be here this morning worshiping God without fear of consequences. Remember our ancestors have died for this freedom and the battle continues today in many parts of the world for the political freedom that we enjoy in this country. Political freedom is important but it can't be the freedom for which Christ set us free. He didn't rescue Israel from political tyranny at the hands of the Romans. His death and resurrection offered no more political freedom, if you think about it, than they had before. They still had to pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus and many of Jesus's own followers would eventually be killed by the Roman government. It wasn't for political freedom that Christ set us free, says Luther.

Neither was it the freedom of the flesh, the second freedom, the freedom to do whatever we want as long as it feels good. That's a favorite freedom I believe in our world today, isn't it? It often seems as if there is only one freedom that matters in popular culture, which is freedom of the flesh. But I find it quite reassuring to us today to know that there's always been at least this since the since the days of Luther back in the 16th century, listening to Luther's words about this freedom sounds as though they could have been written today.

So, if freedom is not political freedom and it's not freedom of the flesh, then what is freedom for which Christ has set us free?

Listen to what Luther says in this sentence or two. Christ has set us free not for political freedom or freedom of the flesh, but for a theological or spiritual freedom that is to make our conscience free and joyful, unafraid of the wrath to come.

This is the most genuine freedom. It is immeasurable. When the other kinds of freedom are compared with the greatness of the glory of this kind of freedom, they hardly amount to much at all. This is the freedom of the gospel, the freedom for which Christ died to make us right with God through the forgiveness of our sins.

This is the freedom that we can celebrate together on a Sundays.

This is the freedom that begins with confessing that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves but ends with hearing that Jesus Christ was given to die for us. And for his sake, God forgives us all our sins.

Yes, Jesus Christ has set us free from the captivity of sin and death and evil. And if the son sets us free, we certainly will be free indeed.

We think of prisoners who after finally being released from prison find their freedom so hard to live with quite often that they try to figure out a way of going back into prison. Why is that? Perhaps because they

prefer the security of knowing what to expect behind those prison walls as opposed to the freedom and the uncertainty out here in the world. They are free from the option of choice.

Paul knew that we would always be tempted to go back to our old habits preferring to be a slave to political and freedom of the flesh because we don't have enough faith to believe in the paramount importance of spiritual freedom. We would always be tempted to believe that there must be something that we have to do that we can do to earn our salvation.

And Paul reminds us in this letter to the Galatians not to submit against that yoke of slavery. And so finally, we're going to just look at living by the spirit because there is another danger that Paul is worried about which seems more prevalent today than ever before. And in verse 13, he says, "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another."

So, what then does it mean to be living to live by the spirit?

Well, you know a tree by its fruit. In the same way, people know us by whom we are and what we do.

It is the one thing people judge us by. And if we fail, what do they say? And they're supposed to be Christians. They say there is no more wonderful description of what it means to live by the spirit than through the fruit of the spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And so today, as we gather in freedom to worship God, I invite us to take some time to examine our lives and the fruit that we are bearing. Is it love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? If it is, then let us thank God for the gift of spiritual freedom won for us by Jesus himself. But if it is not, then let us turn to Christ and seek the gift of true spiritual freedom. Maybe our prayer is to ask God which of these fruits we need to work on.

It is for this freedom that Christ has set us free for love, for joy and for peace. Christ has set us free for patience, kindness, and generosity.

Christ has set us free for faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Christ has set us free. Stand firm.

Can you say that you have total commitment, no half measures, as you walk and live by the spirit?

Amen.