

## **Committed to the Cause**

### **Selected Scripture**

**May 26, 2024**

Tomorrow is a holiday for a lot of people – as it should be. This holiday in some ways is a celebration because of the fruits of the faithfulness of those who gave their lives in service to our country – but more than that, it is a day of memory – of those who gave it all for our freedom and the things we all hold dear. All of those we remember today were committed to the cause. They fought for it, and gave their lives for it. Countless others suffered life long physical injury and pain because they were committed to the cause. And just what was the cause? The defense of a nation that in days past was a Christian nation, and the commitment to defending the freedom and values of America – values that have undergone much change in the last few years.

Is there a greater cause than life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Yes, there is. It is the cause of Christ, the One who gave His life because He was committed to the cause – the same cause each of us should be totally committed to even unto death. The title of the message today is COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE. Are you really – truly – totally COMMITTED?

Countless people have given their lives TO Christ. Countless people have given their lives FOR Christ. Let's think about that for a few minutes. Those people are called what we will first consider today...

## I. THE MARTYRS

1. Since “**martyr**” may not be a word we are really familiar with, let's notice the definition given by Webster:

**Martyr: “A person who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty of witnessing to and refusing to renounce a religion.” “A person who sacrifices something of great value and especially life itself for the sake of principle.”**

2. When you think about martyrs in the Bible, does anybody in particular come to mind? There are many. Who was the first recorded Christian martyr? Stephen.
3. Stephen was chosen as one of the first deacons in the early church. He was given special power by God.

**Acts 6.5 “...Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit...”**

**Read Acts 6.8-15**

4. Every martyr has angered those who were against them. Every martyr could have saved their own life if they chose to recant their faith. Stephen would have been no exception.
5. SAYING you're COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE is one thing. BEING totally COMMITTED is something else.
6. Stephen went before his accusers and the authorities and stood his ground even though he knew what it would mean. Let's read about what that meant:

**Read Acts 7.54-60**

7. Did Stephen back down? No! Why? Because he was COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE and full of the Holy Spirit.

8. Don't miss verse 56. Stephen was given supernatural sight to enable him to do what he needed to do!

**Acts 7.56 And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”**

9. Could it be that those who are martyrs are given supernatural sight as they face death?
10. So... they killed Stephen. As a side note, I suspect this incident had a major impact on the Apostle Paul after he was saved.

**Acts 7.58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.**

**Acts 8.1 “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death...”**

11. Stephen was not alone as the only martyr. Countless others have done the same and are giving their lives for Christ today because they are COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE.

There is always people facing death for their faith, more than you could imagine. Jordan Sekulow with the ACLJ (American Center for Law and Justice) is constantly fighting for those who are on death row for their faith. The ACLJ is an organization dedicated to the defense of constitutional liberties secured by law. The Center's purpose is to engage legal, legislative and cultural issues by implementing an effective strategy of advocacy, education and litigation to ensure that those rights are protected under the law. The organization has participated in numerous cases before the Supreme Court,

Federal Court of Appeals, Federal District Courts, and various state courts regarding freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Tune in to the daily broadcast, "Sekulow," live each weekday at noon ET on over 1,000 radio stations and SiriusXM, with live video streams on Facebook, YouTube, Rumble, and <https://aclj.org/> and sign up to get emails keeping you informed.

### **The last email from ACLJ:**

**He was a 16-year-old Christian kid when they falsely accused him of blasphemy, and now he will hang for his faith.**

**Our deadlines are looming as we appeal his case and fight at the U.N. to save this young Christian's life.**

**You've heard Shahzad's story of being a Christian in Pakistan. Despite the**

**authorities admitting no crime was committed, the judge succumbed to radical Islamic pressure and sentenced this young Christian to hang.**

**Shahzad isn't alone. Christians in Pakistan face growing mob violence, enslavement, and death. And Pakistan does nothing to protect them.**

**We just returned from delivering oral arguments before the entire U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, demanding Shahzad's release. We just secured a major U.N. ruling demanding his freedom, and our attorneys on the ground in Pakistan are filing in Pakistani court to expedite his appeal.**

**Being a Christian should not be a death sentence. Shahzad is our**

**brother in Christ. His life – his freedom – must be defended. As we fight to save his life – and countless other Christian lives – we urgently need you with us.**

Jordan Sekulow  
ACLJ Executive Director

12. God may not call you to be a MARTYR – but He may. Could you do it? Are you COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE? How do you get there? Secondly, let's consider...

## **II. THE METHOD**

1. It really comes down to relationship. I suspect most of us would give our lives for our spouse or children. You might not think twice about it. But many of us would have to think more than twice about giving our physical life for the cause of Christ.

**8-year-old boy dies trying to save family**

**One morning, an eight-year-old Tyler Doohan woke up to find the trailer he was in was on fire. Instinctively, the first thing to do, especially for a child, is to rush out yelling. For one, Doohan, the story was different; he started running toward the fire, waking up everyone who was asleep.**

**Doohan managed to wake up six people, including two younger children. However, when he went in to rescue his grandfather, he succumbed to the raging fire. It is said he died trying to lift his grandpa. Were it not for Doohan's bravery, the number of casualties would have been higher.**

**(2014)**

<https://listverse.com/2022/05/18/10-times-people-sacrificed-themselves-to-save-others/>

2. What is the difference between giving your life for Christ or for your spouse or kids, it really boils down to relationship.

3. For the genuine child of God, your relationship to Christ should be greater than your relationship and commitment to your family.
4. Make no mistake about it – your family is important. You should have a relationship to them second only to your relationship to Christ, BUT – if any part of your family hinders your relationship to Christ, you have a decision to make. Jesus says that those who put their relationship to family above their relationship to Him – you cannot be His disciple - And He says it in a way that should really get your attention.

**Luke 14.26-27 “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry his own cross**

**and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

5. All the translations use the word “**hate.**”  
**The Greek word can mean “detest” or what is more likely here – “love less.”**  
Perhaps the NLT gives us the best translation.

**Luke 14.26 (NLT) “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.”**

**Matthew 10.37-38 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take**

**his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”**

6. We must not let anything, or anyone become a hindrance to our faith. Jesus is number 1. There can only be 1 number 1 that you genuinely have more than any other. It gets back to the greatest commandment. Jesus, quoting the Old Testament said:

**Matthew 22.37-38 And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ 38 This is the great and foremost commandment.”**

7. How do you get to a point where you love somebody like that? It takes commitment from the heart, mind, and soul. It takes dedicated time.

8. It takes a genuine, prioritized COMMITMENT TO THE CAUSE. You can SAY you are committed, but genuine commitment has “**feet.**” You DO what is important, not just talk about it. You spend your money on what is important.
  
9. Does tithing scare you? Lisa and I have tithed for over 40 years – even when we couldn’t afford it. (My experience of tithing with a Discover Card check!)

**Put God first and give Him what is His!**

**“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” NIV). 1 Cor.16:1-2**

**By the way ... You don't give the tithe, you return it back to God ... It belongs to Him!**

**There is a cartoon that shows four frames!**

**1. In the first frame a man looks at a new car!**

**The salesman says, "10% down and low, low payments for 48 months."**

**The man asks, "Where do I sign?"**

**2. In the second frame, the same man looks at a refrigerator!**

**The salesman says, "Nothing down, and no interest for 12 months."**

**Again, the man asks, "Where do I sign?"**

**3. Third frame, same man, this time looking a new home!**

**The salesman says, "10% down and 30 years to pay."**

**For the third time the man asks, "Where do I sign?"**

**4. Fourth frame, same man, this time talking to his pastor!**

**The pastor says: "Would you please sign this commitment card to give God 10% for the next year?"**

**The man in horror replies, "What? Tie myself down for 52 weeks? No sir, the future is too insecure. I won't make a commitment I may not be able to keep!"**

**Isn't it funny, that the only people who don't like the pastor preaching on giving are the people who don't and won't give!**

[Sermoncentral.com](http://Sermoncentral.com)

10. When you realize that you don't own anything, but are just a manager of God's

money, He should be at the top of your budget – not getting the leftovers.

11. Those who give their TIME, TALENT and TITHE are the ones whose lives prove they are COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE.

(Legacy giving)

12. Prayer, worship, fellowship, Bible reading and memorization are all major parts of the METHOD of a life that is really COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE.

13. Finally, those who are really COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE will proclaim...

### **III. THE MESSAGE**

1. Everybody's life tells a story and shares a MESSAGE. Everybody's life influences others – for good or bad. (Very few or neutral)

2. What kind of MESSAGE does your life proclaim?
3. Too many “**Christians**” if they really are... live their lives “**on the fence**” for Jesus. One leg in the world, the other leg in the church.
4. How does that make God feel? We don’t have to wonder. It makes Him sick! It makes Him “**want to throw up!**”
5. This fall Lisa and I are planning a trip to the seven churches mentioned in Revelation. We have been to the island of Patmos where God gave the revelation to John. (I plan to preach a series of messages on those churches when we return). To the church at Laodicea Jesus said:

**Revelation 3.14-15 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says**

**this: 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.**

6. As children of God, a primary responsibility is to spread the good news that Jesus saves!

**We have heard the joyful sound  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Spread the tidings all around  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!**

**Bear the news to ev'ry land,  
Climb the steeps and cross the waves  
Onward! 'tis our Lord's command  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!**

7. Our MESSAGE is the gospel! The good news to all who believe!

**Romans 1.16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God**

**for salvation to everyone who believes,  
to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

8. The MESSAGE is the love of God from John 3.16 and the wrath of God to all who reject Him. – Serious business for sure!

**MATTHEW 10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

**LUKE 12:5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!**

### **Conclusion**

Have you responded to the call of the gospel? I challenge you to do it today! Do you “**call**” yourself a Christian? It’s time to

act like it and really be COMMITTED TO  
THE CAUSE!

## **Prayer**