



Sermon Series Notes

“An Above Average Christian Commitment” (Selected Scriptures)

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Acts 18:1-8

Paul’s condition when he arrived in Corinth (See I Cor.2:1-5). Paul’s experience in Athens was extremely disappointing, and it obviously took a toll on him (Acts 17:16-34). In Corinth Paul was abused by his own people, the Jews. This was quite common for Paul, but this also must have taken a heavy toll on him.

Despite the rejection he experienced by the Jews in Corinth, many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized. Corinth was an incredibly pagan environment, and I have no doubt that Paul was expecting more tough times now that a significant blow had been dealt to the devil by all these pagan Corinthians getting saved. Paul needed an encouraging word badly!

Read vv.9-11 Based on this encouraging word from the Lord Paul decided to camp out in Corinth for a year and a half!

vv.12-17 Paul’s faith in God’s word to him must have been tested here! God is of course true to His word, and somebody besides Paul takes the beating here. Note: Crispus was the synagogue ruler, but for reasons we are not told now the new ruler is Sosthenes. Crispus got out just in time!

Now note with me verse 18.

Cenchrea was the port for Corinth, so he takes this vow as he’s leaving the area. We know from other scriptures that he is headed for Jerusalem. The **vow** he took was undoubtedly the vow of a Nazirite (See Numbers 6:1-8). Numbers 6:18 says that the hair was to be cut off “at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” The hair could be cut off anywhere, but the sacrifice (along with the dedicated hair) could only be offered at the temple in Jerusalem.

The purpose of the Nazirite vow was to make an above average commitment to the Lord.

Nazirite = “Consecrated or devoted one”

It comes from a root word which means to separate. The physical restrictions associated with it have spiritual meaning.

The spiritual application to the physical aspects of the Nazarite vow:

1. Not eating anything that comes from the grapevine.
 - The fruit of the vine was a symbol of earthly joy; wedding in Cana of Galilee where Jesus turned water into wine (joy of earthly marriage, etc.); regarded as the sum and substance of all sensual enjoyments. By abstaining during the Nazarite vow, one was stating that ultimately their joy and enjoyment of life came ultimately from their relationship with and commitment to God.
2. Not cutting your hair.
 - For a man seems to suggest bearing shame for God (I Cor.11:14); For a woman? (Her glory, her pride; willing to have head shaved at the completion of her vow). So it implies a willingness to bear shame as a result of commitment to the Lord.
3. No contact with dead bodies.
 - Note: "Even if his own father or mother or brother or sister dies..."
 - When Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu died as a result of their irreverent act, God told Moses and his remaining two sons not to mourn publicly. By doing so they were honoring God above even close family members.
 - Matt.10: 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me..."
 - Implies making God the highest priority over any other relationships.

There were lots of reasons a person might make a Nazarite vow.

1. Because of a special call God has placed on your life?
 - Special works for God require special consecration to God; Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were all lifelong Nazarites.
2. Because you have a desire to be completely consecrated to God.
3. You have allowed something (or someone) to pull you away from a complete and total commitment to Jesus Christ. In coming back to Christ, you take this vow in order to go beyond the level of spiritual maturity you were at before.

Question; Why did Paul make his vow? We are not told, so we are free to speculate, but only with Scripture guiding our speculation.

1. An above average commitment based on his above average calling.
2. A commitment to never depend on eloquence or human wisdom in sharing the message of the gospel (I Cor.2:1-5).
 - Did Paul make a “mistake” in Athens? I’m not saying dogmatically that he did, but let’s assume he did. He of course was not above making mistakes (Acts 23:1-5). But when Paul did make a mistake, he also became an example in what any follower of Jesus Christ should do as a result of the mistake. He humbled himself, and made a fresh commitment to the Lord. After leaving Athens, that commitment specifically related to never trying to impress anyone with human wisdom, but rather always depend on the simple yet profoundly powerful message of the cross (See I Cor.1:22-25).
3. Thankfulness to the Lord for the reprieve from suffering while in Corinth.
 - William Barclay suggests, “No doubt Paul was thinking of all God’s goodness to him in Corinth and took this vow to show his gratitude.”
4. A commitment to persevere through the trials that lay ahead (See Acts 20:22-24).
5. A commitment to purity (I John 3:2-3; I Cor.6:9-11). Perhaps the intense worldliness of Corinth made Paul want to express his dedication and separation unto the Lord more than ever.
6. Was overcome by thoughts of God’s amazing grace toward him (See I Tim.1:12-15).
7. He just did not to be an average Christian (Phil.3:4-6; Gal.1:14). Could he put any less effort for Christ than he had for Judaism?

CONCLUSION

- Would you like to make a special commitment/vow to the Lord?
- Consider carefully before making a vow (Eccl.5:4-5; Luke 14:25-33)
- What is your commitment, and what sacrifice is required in connection with that commitment?