



WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL
Volume 9 Number 31
August 20, 2014

Analyzing Your Commitment to Christ

by Freddy Davis

Do you ever look at certain people and stand amazed at their commitment in the face of any and all odds? They have a goal or cause and are so committed to its accomplishment that they are willing to give up everything for it – up to and including their lives.

In truth, we don't very often see that kind of commitment. I can think of just a few.

Radical Islamists - In various places around the world these extremists will strap on suicide vests and kill themselves in order to kill their enemies. Other examples include the ISIS army in Iraq and Syria who are so committed they will stop at nothing to push forward their religion – including cutting off people's heads, raping women and children, destroying churches, homes and shrines and more. They are, literally, slaughtering thousands of people who have done nothing but refuse to convert to Islam and are willing to commit human rights abuses and even war crimes to achieve their goals.

Environmental Radicals – People who are part of groups like Sea Shepherd, Greenpeace, Earth First!, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), and the Earth Liberation Army (ELA) are all willing to destroy property and injure people to prevent development of land they believe should be maintained in a pristine state.

Radical Animal Rights Activists - Those who are active in groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Animal Defense League, and Animal Equality believe so fully that animals are more important than humans that they are also willing to destroy property, hurt other

human beings and destroy businesses in order to further their cause.

Anarchists - Anarchists are people who use violence to try and overturn every societal and governmental institution they possibly can with no intention of establishing any other system in its place. They believe in stateless societies which would be self-governed by voluntary institutions. They tend to use violent methods to try and tear down the already established societal institutions.

Jesus Christ - Jesus Christ was willing to die for his cause and was actually executed on a Roman cross. He received this hatred from the state simply for not being willing to "play ball" with the political and religious authorities. He taught love and righteousness to a religious and political leadership which was so distraught by him exposing their hate and hypocrisy that they simply had to get rid of him. He believed so much in his mission that he took the cross rather than compromise his convictions. His radicalism, contrary to that of all the others listed above, was designed to show love rather than to destroy.

Our Christian faith doesn't call on us to destroy property and kill people. But there is no question that it expects believers to exercise the kind of commitment that Jesus Christ demonstrated. Christian radicalism calls people to be every bit as committed to the cause of Christ as evil radicals are to their causes. The only difference is that Christ's cause results in life and blessing rather than death and degradation.

The Nature of Christian Radicalism

Christian radicalism has a biblical foundation and leads to particular outcomes that Jesus himself defined. We are called to live a life where:

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1. We allow no other master than Jesus - Matthew 6:24-25
2. We live in total obedience to God - Matthew 7:21-23
3. Our extremism is expressed in service to others - Matthew 20:25-28
4. We exercise extreme humility toward others - Matthew 23:12
5. We demonstrate extreme self-denial in order to live for Christ - Mark 8:34-38
6. We give absolute devotion to God and no other - Mark 10:17-22
7. We are willing to live for Christ even if it means being hated by others - Luke 6:22
8. We love God above everything else - Luke 14:26-27

These eight acts of commitment may seem somewhat benign because they don't call for "getting in people's faces" in order to live a life for Christ. But they are not benign in any sense as they graphically point out the wrongs in society in a way which will very often bring persecution. So we come to the question, "Do you have the level of commitment to your faith (the truth) that non-Christian radicals have to theirs (a lie)?"

The Expression of Your Radicalism

Here is an interesting thought. Do you realize that you actually are radically committed to your beliefs? The fact is, you express your worldview beliefs in your life, in a radical sense, no matter what you believe. While many people, including many Christians, deny that they are committed to carrying out their beliefs in a radical manner, that is not actually the case. What we have is a situation where most people's beliefs are not actually what they think they are at a worldview level. What you believe at a worldview level you will fight for – and you will fight in a particular way. Some people's fighting method involves hiding, running away or ignoring conflict, while oth-

ers fight by picking up bombs and guns. Some people's causes involve social or religious issues while other people care only about their own comfort or material possessions.

Let's look at an example of someone who might be considered more of a benign radical. Consider, for a moment, a person who claims to be a Christian and believes the Bible yet is sexually engaged with a partner outside of marriage. Most likely, if confronted with this contradiction, the person will simply run away or get "in your face angry" in order to defend himself.

So, what can we say about this person? Well first of all, the claim to believe the Bible simply cannot be true since the person's lifestyle contradicts what is taught in the Bible. That person may hold some kind of affirmation about the truth of the Bible, but his or her true beliefs somehow permit behavior which the Bible considers immoral. A lightly held affirmation is not necessarily an indication of true beliefs. The beliefs a person holds at a worldview level will be radically lived out in life. Someone who truly believes the Bible will not participate in sexual relations outside of marriage. People who run from the truth about marriage or get in your face to defend an immoral lifestyle are radically living out a lifestyle that has a non-biblical base.

The truth is, you do radically live out your most basic beliefs. You do the things your worldview beliefs permit while you don't do the things those beliefs don't affirm. If something goes against your beliefs at a worldview level, you simply will not do it. In fact, you would never even consider doing it. On the other hand, if your worldview beliefs affirm something, you cannot help but live life and do actions which are affirmations of those beliefs.

The members of ISIS in Iraq who are slaughtering all the "heretics" literally

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think nothing of it. In fact, they are excited to do it because they believe it is carrying out the will of God. By the same token, why do you think there are so few Christians sharing their faith with the same enthusiasm? The reasons are the same. Both of them are living out their worldview beliefs.

Worldview Belief Analysis

So, if we truly want to get to the root of our worldview beliefs, where do we start? We can't start by simply asking ourselves what we believe. Our conscious beliefs don't generally take us to the level of worldview beliefs – which are mostly unconscious. Rather, we must look at what we do.

There are reasons people who claim to be Christians don't live out their Christian faith. All of these reasons are backed up by worldview beliefs which don't fully correspond with the teachings of the Bible.

1. Some people don't actively live out their Christian faith because they feel intimidated by other people. What this indicates is that, at a worldview level, they are not confident enough in Christian beliefs to stand strong in them.

2. Still others don't live out their Christian faith because they live an ungodly lifestyle. In this case, their worldview beliefs somehow give them permission to participate in activities which are not consistent with Christian teachings. In other words, they hold worldview beliefs which come from someplace other than the Bible.

3. There are some who don't actively live out their Christian faith because they lack knowledge of the basics of their faith. This is easily remedied, but is often not overcome because the belief that the individual needs to learn the basics is so weak at a worldview level.

4. Finally, some don't actively live out their Christian faith because their relationship with God is weak. For these people, the belief that the relationship with God must be kept strong is lacking at the worldview level.

Conclusion

Our commitment to Christ is certainly something that is held inside our hearts. But it cannot be separated from the outward expression of those inner beliefs. The true nature of our commitment will be expressed in life. And if that expression does not conform with what has been revealed to us by God in Scripture, then what we have is not a commitment to Christian beliefs.

Many people think of salvation as having occurred as an event in time when they said some words about inviting Christ into their lives. But making that confession is only the starting point of salvation. Christian salvation is a process, not an event. It begins at a point in time, but continues from that point through the rest of our mortal lives and on into eternity. The part of it which goes with everyday life in this world is continual spiritual growth and maturity. It is held in the heart AND expressed by a faithful life and witness in the world. When this is not happening, it is questionable as to whether or not one's professed faith is genuine faith. When it is, though, not only do we experience personal meaning in our lives, but the world is also affected as God works his will through our lives.

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