Commitment or Complacency?

(Richard Bartholomew)

 A motivational phrase used by the Shearson Lehman Brothers and adopted by the Internal Revenue Service is “Renewed Commitment.” They said about commitment: “Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is the words that speak boldly of intentions. And the actions which speak louder than words. It is making the time when there is none. Coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.”

 In the business world there is a recognized need for both management and employees to re-dedicate themselves to their jobs and the organization. Why? Complacency is the primary reason. Human beings have a tendency to drift into patterns of behavior where mediocrity is the norm. The “fire” leaves the spirit and the energetic outlook that we once had is no longer there. Things still get done, but not as well. Morale suffers, attitudes become more negative and performance is marginal at best. We just try to get by, not really caring about the quality product of our efforts.

 This is a real concern in other areas of life as well. Many marriages fail for the same reasons. Family relationships and friendships drift into stagnation for lack of concentrated effort. Children see complacency in their parents’ lives and duplicate the behavior in their schoolwork and personal lives. Rather than buckle down and work, we all tend to look for the path of least resistance, stay comfortable and non-confrontational and go through life avoiding anything that would involve substantial work and an all-out effort to succeed.

 Nowhere is this outlook on life more prevalent and more dangerous than in our spiritual lives. Dante said, “The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who remain neutral in a time of moral crisis.” Edmund Burke said, “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.” Jesus warned the church in Laodicea that they would be spit out of His mouth for being lukewarm (Revelation 3:14-16). In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus uses the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to teach against indifference. The rich man was not shown to be evil, but he apparently went to Hell for being indifferent.

 Our Lord, also, told us that the pathway to Heaven is narrow and that few will find the way (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus later taught that He did not come to bring peace, but that He came with a sword (Matthew 10:34). And the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 and Luke 19 clearly teaches us that God expects us to productively use our gifts and abilities and not just drift through life without taking risks. God despises complacency and we must guard against it.

 Commitment is what Christianity is all about. Failure to consciously make a commitment to Jesus and His eternal cause will result in the condemnation of our souls. This is a fact. In John 8:42-48, Jesus says that anyone who does not learn His Word and live accordingly are children of the devil. This leaves no middle ground, no approval for straddling the fence on relevant issues and no room for complacency. We must be committed to our spouses, to our children, to fellow Christians and, above all, to God.

 We must be fully committed with all our hearts and minds, relying on this commitment every time we make a decision. We should periodically step back to re-examine our commitments to make sure that our energies are focused as God would have them, and then be willing to change our lives as necessary. Commitment or complacency? It is a lifelong challenge that we must meet every day.

**Ordinary Trials, Extraordinary Results**

(Gary Henry)

 “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name” (Revelation 3:12).

 If we choose to deal with them wisely, the daily round of “ordinary” duties and “common” difficulties can be the source of something that is truly magnificent. The greatness of human character is often refined from seemingly unimportant and worthless materials. Before we despise any of our days or any of our decisions as inconsequential, let us think again. As God sees things, something of tremendously great consequence is in the making. It would be tragic to lose out on what is coming by failing to pay attention to its very “plain” preparation.

Just as God’s standards of greatness are different from ours, the process through which He produces greatness is also different. Who but God would have thought to prepare Moses or David to lead the nation of Israel by sending them off for years to herd flocks of animals? And who but God would have seen that His own Son, the King of Kings, would be born in a stable and raised in one of the poorest homes in Galilee, far from the usual training grounds of leadership? It was in a simple carpenter’s shop that Jesus “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). How is it that we think our own hardships have to make the evening news before they are significant?

 Whatever our daily troubles in this world may be, they are “light” compared to the “weight” of the glory that will eventually result if our lives have been lived in fellowship with God (2 Corinthians 4:17). The dazzling glory that is up ahead will be out of all proportion to the often dull and unexciting affliction that will have produced it. so we should be careful not to underestimate ourselves. The humdrum appearance of our lives very likely conceals the fact that something great is going on.

 “In what strange quarries and stone yards the stones for the celestial wall are being hewn! Out of the hillsides of humiliated pride, deep in the darkness of crushed despair; in the fretting and dusty atmosphere of little cares; in the hard cruel contacts that man has with man; wherever souls are being tried and ripened, in whatever commonplace and homely ways – there God is hewing out pillars for His temple.” (Phillips Brooks)