

DEAR AEBI: *“What should Commitment mean to a Christian?”*

“Commitment” is defined by the Webster's New World Dictionary as "a pledge or promise to do something. . .the act of committing." To “commit” is defined as "to give in charge or trust; deliver for safekeeping; entrust...to hand over or set apart to be disposed of or put to some purpose...to be bound as by a promise; to pledge...implies the delivery of a person or thing into the charge or keeping of another...entrust implies committal based on trust and confidence.



There are two basic ideas involved in commitment: (1) a promise to do something; (2) entrusting something to another to be guarded and/or used for dedicated purpose. Let's look at these concepts.

(1) To Promise. Promises are made to be broken, right? Wrong! Promises are not to be broken; in the Old Testament, vows or oaths were to be kept, and failure to do so was sin (Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21). So binding was a vow or promise that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to fulfil his vow (Judges 11:30-39). In the New Testament, Jesus (Matt. 5:33-37) and James (Jas. 5:12) both insist that we should be so truthful that our promises do not need oaths attached to them; if we say "Yes," we mean "Yes," and nothing more is required. The only condition to be placed on our promises is, "If the Lord wills, we will do..." (Jas. 4:15). Now, when we confess Jesus as Lord, we obligate ourselves to do what he says, thereby making him Lord of our lives (Luke 6:46); thus confessing Christ is promising to obey him!

(2) To entrust. To entrust is to set apart and deliver something to someone for use or safekeeping. This is exactly what Romans 12:1-2 says Christians should do with themselves--give ourselves as living sacrifices to God to guard and use for His glory. Paul must refer to such a commitment in 2 Tim. 1:12, a passage familiar to us because it is quoted in song: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard (keep) that which I have committed unto him against that day." Peter says that Jesus "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" when he was reviled and tormented by the Jews (1 Pet 2:3), and he urges all Christians to do likewise in 4:19--"Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator."

The idea of commitment to Christ goes back to the time when we acknowledge Christ as Lord, repent of our sins, and are baptized into Christ. In doing that we are promising to obey Christ's will and are committing or giving ourselves into His keeping and devoting our lives to Him. That means we put Christ and His church first--before sports, TV, picnics, personal pleasure, material things, anything

Charles Aebi