



Coffeeville First Baptist Church
By **Craig Baker, Pastor**

It is that time of year when commitment and renewal are on the minds of many people, so there is no better time for us to focus on our commitment to Jesus and His church. It is common, almost expected, that many begin the New Year by making some sort of resolution; a commitment to do something different, new, or better,

Throughout history there are some great examples of commitment. One of the most well-known occurred on April 21st, 1519, when the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez sailed into the harbor of Vera Cruz, Mexico. He brought with him only about 600 men, and yet over the next two years his vastly outnumbered forces were able to defeat Montezuma and all the warriors of the Aztec empire, making Cortez the conqueror of Mexico. How was this incredible feat accomplished, when two prior expeditions had failed even to establish a colony on Mexican soil? Here's the secret. Cortez knew from the very beginning that he and his men faced incredible odds. He knew that the road before them would be dangerous and difficult. He knew that his men would be tempted to abandon their quest and return to Spain.

So, as soon as Cortez and his men had come ashore and unloaded their provisions, he ordered their entire fleet of eleven ships destroyed. His men stood on the shore and

watched as their only possibility of retreat burned and sank into the ocean, so from that point on, they knew beyond any doubt there was no turning back. Nothing lay behind them but empty ocean. Their only option was to go forward, to conquer or die.

Throughout history there are many similar accounts of great commitment. The Bible contains many of those accounts. Consider the account of prophet Elijah and the calling of his attendant and eventual successor, Elisha, found in 1 Kings 19:15-21.

Here we see Elisha, a simple farmer, who is suddenly and unexpectedly approached by the famous prophet Elijah who calls Elisha to accompany him and serve him as his personal assistant and student. In those days this would have been considered a great honor; a once in a lifetime opportunity, but it was an opportunity that required great commitment. The student was required to completely dedicate their life to following the teacher, usually for many years, even decades. The Prophet Elijah in obedience to God selects Elisha by throwing his cloak over him as he walked by. Elijah continues on his way, and Elisha runs after him and ask for time to say goodbye to his family before following the Prophet. Elijah makes it clear that the decision to come is entirely up to Elisha, but he must decide. In response, Elisha not only chooses to accept the call, but he slaughters his oxen and

feeds them to his neighbors, burning his plowing equipment to cook the meat. By doing this, he publicly and irrevocably declares his intention to leave his former way of life and commit to doing what God has called him to do.

The thought of being committed to anyone or anything makes many of us uncomfortable because we are afraid. We began asking ourselves, "What if it doesn't work out, what if I fail, what if I get let down, what if it turns out to not be worth it," and many other questions come up out of our uncertainties and fears. There is nothing wrong with a certain level of cautiousness. God does not want us to be reckless or foolish. He does not want us to just rush into things without counting the costs. He does not want us to go jumping into commitments we never intend to keep, but once we have decided to follow Jesus and realize the calling He has for us then He expects us to be completely committed, to burn our boats and plows; to kill our oxen, to get rid of whatever may hold us back.

Consider the Twelve Disciples, several of those guys were fishermen. They were going about their business of fishing when Jesus came along and called them to follow Him. In response they dropped their nets. They left their families. They walked away from everything to follow Jesus.

As I said this is the time of year when many think of committing to do this or that, and no commitment is more important to us as believers than our commitment to Jesus and His church for when Jesus calls us to be disciples He calls us to take up our cross and follow Him, to make a life-long, absolute commitment. The question is, "Have you made that kind of commitment to Jesus?"

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