

The Impact Of Commitment

(Acts 7:54-60)

Introduction

The Olympic Games, Mexico, 1968. The marathon is the final event on the program. The Olympic stadium is packed and there is excitement as the first athlete, an Ethiopian runner, enters the stadium. The crowd erupts as he crosses the finish line.

Way back in the field is another runner, John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania. He has been eclipsed by the other runners. After 30 kilometers his head is throbbing, his muscles are aching and he falls to the ground. He has serious leg injuries and officials want him to retire, but he refuses. With his knee bandaged Akwhari picks himself up and hobbles the remaining 12 kilometers to the finish line. An hour after the winner has finished Akwhari enters the stadium. All but a few thousand of the crowd have gone home. Akwhari moves around the track at a painstakingly slow pace, until finally he collapses over the finish line.

It is one of the most heroic efforts of Olympic history. Afterward, asked by a reporter why he had not dropped out, Akwhari says, "My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish." (Source: reported on Sydney 2000 Olympics website.)

Commitment is "*the act of committing, pledging, or engaging oneself.*"

Commitment is better illustrated than defined. Daniel "*made up his mind*" (Daniel 1:8) long before being shipped off to Babylon. Joshua declared his commitment in his famous "*as for me and my house*" speech (Joshua 24:15). Isaiah set his "*face like flint*" (Isaiah 50:7), which is another way of saying he firmly decided.

Loyalty is "faithfulness to one's obligations or engagements." Loyalty is the follow-through of commitment or the

maintaining of one's commitment. Both the commitment and loyalty of Stephen will be scrutinized in this message. The focus will be the impact he had on others, which resulted from his commitment and loyalty.

Contextualize Acts (Acts 7:54-60). Stephen is first mentioned in the Scriptures in Acts 6:5. He is described as “*full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*” and is an unequalled example of commitment.

Contextualize this sermon in the Acts Sermon Series.

I. The Courage of Commitment

Principle: Genuine commitment is constant in spite of changing circumstances.

A) During success (6:8)

B) During Opposition (6:9-7:2)

C) During Death (7:54-60)

II. The Impact of Commitment

Principle: Constant commitment will impact people, moving them (positively or negatively) in relationship to Christ.

A) Negatively (Acts 7:54-60)

Note: When religion is confronted with truth, it is enraged.

B) Positively (Acts 22:17-20)

III. The Results of Commitment

Principle: True commitment never goes unrewarded.

A) For Stephen, death meant coronation.

B) For Israel, Stephen's death meant condemnation. Israel had permitted John the Baptist's death, asked for Jesus' death and initiated Stephen's death.

C) For the church in Jerusalem, Stephen's death meant liberation (Acts 1:8). The ensuing persecution led to a dispersal of Christians throughout the region.

D) For Saul, Stephen's death meant salvation.

Conclusion

You can impact others for Christ. The key is a substantive commitment to Christ. That is our all out, no-holds-barred, unqualified commitment to submission to Christ. How about it? The person you impact will be eternally grateful.