

Morning Clouds and Early Dew

Joe Slater

Commitments are easy to keep – for awhile. Long-term faithfulness is another matter entirely. We see the difference in marriages. Few would even think of cheating on a spouse shortly after the wedding; but years later, infidelity damages or destroys a shocking percentage of marriages. In time, about one in five husbands will cheat, and about one in six wives will too.

Aside from adultery, somewhere between ¼ and ½ of marriages end in divorce for whatever reason (depending on how you skew the statistics). “Until death parts us” holds less and less meaning among people who reason that “God wants me to be happy, and I’m not happy any more married to this person!” Long-term commitment gives way to live-for-the-moment pleasure-seeking.

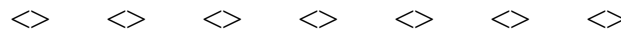
Marriage is not the only area where we need to revive long-term faithfulness. What about our commitment to God? (That would include marriage, for it is God who joins spouses together; but it also encompasses other factors.) To ancient Israel God said, “*Your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away*” (Hosea 6:4). As soon as the sun rises, the thin morning clouds disappear and the dew dries up. They they’re back the next morning. Israel’s faithfulness to God was that way – nice while it lasted, but generally it didn’t last very long.

What about you and me? We commit ourselves to attend services regularly – all of them – even Bible classes. We’re going to read our Bibles every day. We’re going to pray frequently. And so we do – for a few days, or maybe a few weeks. Then the old habits creep back in. Something comes up. Before long, we’re back to the way

we used to be. Then we re-commit ourselves, and the cycle continues.

Brethren, let’s break the cycle! Let our commitment to God be permanent! We are to put the old man of sin to death, not just put him to sleep temporarily (see Romans 6:6). When we come forth from baptism as Jesus came forth from the tomb, we are to “*walk in newness of life*” (6:4).

Long-term commitment is not easy, but it certainly is possible; and it is what the Lord requires of us.



Faith in 3-D

FAITH DESCRIBED

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)

FAITH DEMANDED

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6)

FAITH DEMONSTRATED

"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..." (Hebrews 11:4)

"By faith Noah...prepared an ark for the saving of his household..." (Hebrews 11:7)

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called...went out..." (Hebrews 11:8)

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." (Hebrews 11:24)

--Jerry Joseph (via Campellsville, KY)

I’m Not Good Enough

We receive a brotherhood paper that usually lists the accomplishments and great deeds performed by Christians. I love to read these, but they often leave me with the feeling that I have not done enough wonderful things for God and my fellow man. In other words, I’m just not good enough.

This way of thinking contains several fallacies. First, scripture tells us that “*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). No one is good enough. If we are working to earn our salvation, we are working for the wrong reason. That attitude negates God’s saving grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Second, I believe that if we let God work through us, He puts us where He needs us. We may not become a famous doctor, lawyer, teacher, or great leader, but our Father needs those who will humbly do what needs done where they are. God will use our talents, whether they be taking care of our family, encouraging others, or just giving a thirsty soul a glass of cold water. God does not give everyone the same talents, and He wants us to serve Him where we are.

Third, God does want us to grow, but He doesn’t expect us to do it by ourselves. God told Paul, “*My power is made perfect in weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:9). We are weak, but it is God’s power, not ours, that strengthens us.

Fourth, we should know that our self-doubts and discouragement are Satan’s weapons against us. Satan knows that if we get down on ourselves, we will lose our focus on God and Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. When we focus on God and Jesus, we are always good enough.

--Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO)