

THE PENTECOST

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Cover photo: Port Townsend, Washington

Above photo: Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

Following Jesus at times was glorious as huge crowds were drawn to Him and listened to His teaching. However it was not always this way. On one occasion Jesus had been teaching crowds on the narrowness of salvation. Salvation is only through Him. Many were offended and began to leave. Jesus turned to His disciples and asked them if they also wanted to leave? Peter answered saying "... Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68 ASV) In other words, "Jesus, we are staying with You." Read with us as we look at the parable of the sower, returning to the Lord, the history of the Bible as a book, as well as the testimony of Paul Adefarasin. God Bless you.

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PAUL ADEFARASIN- SAVED BY CHRIST

Sometimes God does His greatest work through men and women who you would not initially expect Him to use. Passed over by men, falling short of what everyone considers the basic requirements of leadership, a man is often selected by God to be an object of His divine workmanship. One such life is that of Paul Adefarasin. Paul was Born in Lagos, Nigeria to Caring parents. Wanting the best for him they sent him to high school in England and university in the United States. Despite all he had going for him, turmoil was brewing inside of Paul. He had begun experimenting with drugs and before long was thoroughly addicted. He became an outcast to family and friends, a disappointment to all who had previously believed in him. Paul's life was spinning out of control so he decided to return to Nigeria. There awaited him terrible news.

Paul's father was diagnosed with cancer and had been given three months to live. Paul was desperate. Who could help him? He turned to spiritualists and witchdoctors for assistance. To Paul's disappointment, their witchcraft did not help. In the depths of despair Paul turned to an old schoolmate for advice. This friend asked Paul to come with him and meet his mother. Paul was about to meet an amazing woman. She was a woman of great faith and in no time at all she had Paul's trust. Paul told his story to this sympathetic listener. After a while she offered to pray with him. According to Paul as they prayed God's presence seemed to fill the room.

Something had happened to Paul that day. He was not the same person. One day a friend came to visit him and in their discussion the friend told Paul about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. He prayed for Paul and again Paul had a special experience. He says that he was aware of God's presence moving through him. More good things were in store. He desired to visit his father and while there he laid hands on him and prayed for him to be healed. Miraculously Paul's father recovered and lived another seven years.

Saved and baptized in God's Spirit, Paul next began sensing a call on his life to the ministry. He began a small house church of seven people and called it the "House on the Rock." Prayer

became a huge emphasis. Prayer meetings would often carry through the night. More people started coming and contributing. They expanded to holding meetings in a restaurant. House on the Rock has grown to a membership of 7000 with 36 branch churches. They have community based outreaches as well, such as a feeding program, relief for disaster victims, prison outreach and rehabilitation program for former prisoners.

Paul came to Christ under desperate circumstances. Jesus saved him, changed him, and has made something beautiful of his life. Since then his life has purpose and others are being touched as his ministry flourishes.

Shawn Stevens

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COME, LET US RETURN TO THE LORD

Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Hosea 6:1-3

In the eighth century BC these words flowed from the heart and quill of the prophet Hosea. He lived in a time of transition. Under King Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom of Israel and King Uzziah in the southern kingdom of Judah, God's people had been enjoying a time of prosperity. Assyria, the world power of the time was preoccupied with its north and east borders. This time of prosperity however did not lead to a prosperity of faith. Instead wickedness spread. After Jeroboam II's death, Israel fell into great political instability and Assyria, under new leadership itself, became aggressive towards Israel. Under the strain and anguish of seeing God's people wallowing in impiety and the strain of the danger on Israel's borders, Hosea cry's out this appeal. He calls Israel to return to The Lord and throw herself on His mercy.

If Hosea were alive today, we might find him feeling a similar way and saying a similar thing to us. Living in a postmodern world of relative values and situation ethics many modern 21st century men and women continue their journey away from God and His truth. Our backsliding is in spite of present dangers which would and should cause us to run to God all the harder. Economic uncertainty troubles millions, aids threatens and claims the lives of millions, international terrorism has risen beyond what would have been imagined only one generation ago. Stress related illness afflicts large numbers. Yet, people today, in many cases, feel that they are better off living away from God than living with a God who would rule their lives. Even many churches have this same apathy.

Friend this is an apathy away from which, at this present time, we can return. Are you torn? He will heal. Are you stricken? He will bind you up. He has a work and a transformation to do in you and I which is infinitely worth surrendering to and submitting to. Similar to the physical body of Christ being in the grave for three days and then resurrecting, after two days He shall revive us. However for this to happen we must return to him. Come let us return to the Lord.

He wil "revive us". Let those words sink in. Our year of jubilee is coming. But there is a hump to get over. Unbelief, pride, self sufficiency, and inflexibility to change, all have chained us down from flying in the skies of revival. Self satisfaction also cements us in our present state. This cement must be broken up. Friend, let us break loose of our habit beaten path and cry to God for His purposes to be fulfilled in us. Let us not make excuses for sin. We sometimes extol the sacrifices of great missionaries, but God doesn't have two standards of consecration. We are to be consecrated to Him and His service also, even if that service is in our own nation. We need all of the fruit, gifts,empowerment, wisdom, direction and anointing that we can get from the Lord.

"and he shall come unto us as the rain," This shower shall be even more refreshing than natural rain would be to a dehydrated desert traveler. Oh to be ushered into the spiritual and heavenly realm where we are feeding on Christ and where the deeper Christian life is our normal experience. He will revive us. He will come to us like the rain brother, sister, do you, do I, dare to believe. Do we dare to hold this scripture before The Lord and claim it as a promise? Pray with me,

Jesus, we have come to return. Our sins have torn us. Our sins have striken us down. We need Your forgiveness. We need Your grace. We need Your healing and binding. Even in former times of natural prosperity we have not always been thankful nor have we always pursued spiritual prosperity, with hungry hearts. We have even been careless. We have been apathetic. Now Lord we see it and return. Forgive us. Heal us. Revive us and come to us like

the rain. We are the dehydrated desert traveler. We need all of the life, healing, fruit, spiritual gifts, wisdom, and direction You can give us. We have read that You will revive us and that You will come to us like the rain. We have seen it in Your word and now faith is rising. Our eyes are rising also and we fix them on You. We close up our umbrellas and lift up our buckets. Answer our pray and fill us with Your Spirit. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

Scripture taken from the King James Version.

ONE LORD OF THE HARVEST

One LORD of the harvest,
One Pearl of Great Price.
One gospel with power
To save a wandering life.

One Lamb Who is worthy,
And one sacrifice.
One atonement sufficient
To buy eternal life.

One door to the sheepfold,
One way that is right.
One voice that we follow
As we're walking through this life.

This stone, it was rejected,
By men He came to save.
But here it forms the corner
Of this house that God has made.

Shawn Stevens

GOD'S WORD FROM ITS BEGINNING

The Bible has been a faithful guide and staff, comfort and hope, for multitudes throughout history. How did this great Book begin? To our knowledge, God's first communication with man, which was written down, was called the *Decologue* or *Ten Words*, which we know as the *Ten Commandments*. These were given to Moses on his first mountain encounter with God. Moses then went up the mountain a second time and was given more instructions from God. This time Moses wrote down the words of the *Covenant*. This was the beginning of the sacred writings.² Those sacred writings were followed by additional sacred writings, compiled and passed down to us, all of them, in time becoming known as the *Holy Bible*.

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *Biblos*, which was the outer coat of a papyrus reed used in Egypt during the 11th century B.C. The plural form of this word is *Biblia* and it was used by Christians to describe their sacred writings as early as the 2nd century. This word was carried over into Latin and the English translation became *Bible*.³ The Bible is divided into two *testaments*, which is another word for *covenants*. Its first half is called the *Old Testament* and its second half is called the *New Testament*. The Old Testament consists of inspired Jewish writings which predate Christ's incarnation. Probably the earliest division of this material was called *The Law And The Prophets*.⁴ The Old Testament is a composition of historical, poetic and prophetic writings.

Why did all of this historical, poetic and prophetic material need to be written down? God had been communicating with man long before Moses' life. However, the problem with oral and other forms of communication is that they are not preserved as accurately as a written tradition. God wanted His Word accurately recorded in written form and, at least by the time of Moses' life, this was begun. We read in the Old Testament that "... Moses wrote all the words of the LORD,...." (Exodus 24.4). Moses was followed by other prophets who continued to record the Word of God.

The Bible teaches that God spoke through the prophets. Some titles that are given in the Bible for prophets are "the man of

God" (see 1 Kings 12.22), "his servant" (see 1 Kings 14.18), "my messenger" (see Matthew 11.10), "a watchman" (see Ezekiel 3.17) and "the seers" (see Isaiah 30.10). The Bible says; "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1.21). Again, we read that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," (Hebrews 1.1). The Bible claims this in many places. Also, the Ten Commandments, recorded by Moses, are prefaced with these words; "And God spake all these words, saying," (Exodus 20.1). God spoke to His prophets directly, telling them what they were to say. For example, He told the prophet Ezekiel that "And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious." (Ezekiel 2.7). The Bible emphatically states that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, ... " (2 Timothy 3.16). The Bible says that the Jews were advantaged because "... unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Romans 3.2). The phrase "thus saith the LORD" and similar expressions are together found in the Old Testament 3,808 times. The Prophet Isaiah, in the first chapter of his Book declares; "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, ..." (Isaiah 1.2).³ Similarly, the Prophet Jeremiah says in his Book;

"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ... " (Jeremiah 1.11). Because of these scriptures, and others, Evangelicals use interchangeably the word "Bible" and the phrase "Word of God."

Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, some might assume that the whole of it would be written down in the same form. This is not true. One of the characteristics of the Bible is how God has used a variety of forms, and a variety of personalities, in communicating His Holy Word. Although all of the Bible's books are inspired, one notices a difference between reading the Apostle Paul's epistles and King David's psalms. Similarly, one notices a difference between Moses' historical books, such as 1 Chronicles, and John's apocalyptic book, Revelation.

The sacred prophetic writings of the Old Testament were passed on from generation to generation. However, in 586 B.C., the Babylonians conquered the Jews and attempted to burn everything in the temple. The Jews were under Babylonian captivity for seventy years and at the end of this period many returned to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. In God's providence, not all copies of the sacred Scriptures were destroyed. Synagogues began springing up everywhere and they needed copies of the Scriptures. This need led to the creation of a new institution and profession, that of the scribes. Scribes zealously and meticulously went about the task of duplicating the Scriptures which were then used in the synagogues.

Another significant development of this period was the rise of Alexander the Great and his conquering of the then-known world. By the time of his death, in 323 B.C., much of the world was bilingual, with Greek as its second language. Around 285 B.C., Demetrius Phalereus, the head of the library in Alexandria, inquired of the king of Egypt whether a Greek translation of the Jewish Law could be made for the library. The king consented and requested from the Jews six scholars from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to work on the translation. In seventy-two days the translation was finished and this translation is known as the Septuagint.⁵ This seems to be the favorite translation of the early Christians. The early Christians soon had another collection of inspired writings in addition to the Old Testament. These were the Gospels, Epistles and Apocalypse of the New Testament. With Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming to Earth the world was again infused with divine prophecy and teaching. The Bible says that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;" (Hebrews 1.1-2). Jesus' words came with the full authority of His Heavenly Father. This is because, as He said; "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14.24). In a prayer to His Heavenly Father, Jesus said; "For I have given unto them the

words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” (John 17.8). He had given His disciples the Word of God. Although Jesus gave His disciples the Word of God, He did not personally write down His divine teachings but, instead, this work was given to some of His disciples and certain others. At the Last Supper, He told His disciples; “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14.26). Here, Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit will do two things. The Holy Spirit will bring to their memory all that Jesus has said to them and He will teach them all things. The Apostle Paul, operating under this same inspiration, wrote many epistles. He knew that his message came from God. He said to the Thessalonians; “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2.13). To the Corinthians, he said; “For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, ...” (1 Corinthians 11.23). With these inspired records of the apostles, and certain others, the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were formed.

The writing of these twenty-seven books, and the acceptance of them as inspired Scripture, is an interesting chapter in Christian history. From the period of 33 A.D. to 50 A.D., emphasis was not put on a written record. This is probably because Christians believed that Christ was coming back imminently. However, by 50 A.D., Christian faith was spreading very rapidly and it was necessary for written copies of apostolic instruction to be supplied to the churches which were springing up everywhere.⁶ Even though emphasis was not on a written record in the first half of the first century, there was a sorting of gospel material. Luke, the author of one of the four Gospels, dedicates his Gospel to a man named Theophilus. He opens with these words:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. (Luke 1.1-4).

Here, we see Luke setting about the work of writing a narrative of Christ's life and ministry. While some, like Luke, wrote gospels, apostles, such as Peter and Paul, wrote epistles (letters). The Apostle John wrote down the prophetic book of Revelation. During this New Testament period, one of Peter's epistles refers to Paul's epistles, giving credence to them (see 2 Peter 3.15-16). Apostolic epistles were circulated (see example Colossians 4.16) and read to congregations (see example 1 Thessalonians 5.27). By the first half of the 2nd century, the apostles' writings were more generally known and had circulated more widely. By the second half of the 2nd century, New Testament books were even more widely recognized as Scripture. These books were organized into a single catalogue of recognized books and distinguished from other Christian literature.⁷

The Bible has truly been a faithful guide for countless men and women who have chosen to follow its lead. Here we have briefly looked at the history of the Bible, as a book, beginning with the giving of the Ten Commandments and ending with the New Testament. We have discussed the nature of the book as history, poetry, and divine prophecy as well as its New Testament use as gospels, prophecy and epistles for teaching the Churches. The Bible has a rich history and we will continue to explore it.

Shawn Stevens

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Elon Foster, 6000 Sermon Illustrations (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 52.
- 2 Ken Connolly, The Indestructible Book : God's Word to Man - How The Bible Began, Vol. 1, Produced by Bueno Distribution, Video Cassette.
- 3 Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 17.
- 4 *ibid.*, 2-3.
- 5 Ken Connolly, The Indestructible Book : God's Word to Man - How The Bible Began, Vol. 1, Produced by Bueno Distribution, Video Cassette.
- 6 *ibid.* 7 Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 345-346.

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- Scripture taken from the King James Version.

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9:

The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matthew 13:18-23:

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

In our modern western world of supermarkets, sophisticated farming equipment, and mass food cultivating production, it is a bit of an adjustment for us to mentally transition back to the simple farming techniques of Jesus' day. Such techniques make up the content of Jesus' parable of the Sower. The parable talks more about the seed, and the success or failure of particular ground types to bring that seed to proper fruition, than it does about the Sower Himself.

We can think of the Sower in the parable as Christ Himself or even possibly Christ working through the lives of His followers. The Sower is doing the work of scattering seed. This sowing is a preaching and teaching work. This is because the

seed is "the word of the kingdom" and this word is scattered through preaching it.

With this parable we are fortunate to have Jesus interpret it for us. The parable is about different kinds of ground which the seed lands upon. This ground is the hearts of people, and what they do with the seed constitutes whether they are good ground or poor ground.

The first ground that we are introduced to is "by the way side" Some of the seed falls beside the road rather than on the field and it is eaten by birds instead of going into the earth. Jesus says that the person represented here is he who hears the word but does not understand it. Because he does not understand it he does not receive it and the devil snatches away from his memory even what he has heard. I do not believe that this one does not understand the word because he is necessarily unintelligent, slow to catch on, or dimwitted. I believe that he does not want to understand. He has chosen beforehand that he is closed to hearing about God's kingdom and whenever this word is brought to him he dismisses it immediately. Their heart is like a hard-packed roadway and untilled. He is stiffnecked and stubborn as well as indifferent to spiritual things. Unless there is some change in his heart, there is no way for God's word to take root in this kind of heart. His heart is calloused, unresponsive and refuses God's truth. This is the easiest kind of heart for the devil to snatch away truth from.

Some of the seed fell on stony ground where the seed "had not much earth:" This ground represents the second type of person or heart. This kind of soil is shallow. The seed does germinate and a plant begins to sprout up but the plant is prevented from rooting deeply by the surface rocks. What is Jesus saying here? I believe that this soil represents the person or heart that responds positively to the gospel, and is converted but "they withered away." This is because he stumbles once persecution or tribulation comes to him as a result of the word. Jesus' word is extremely offensive to those who love a life of sin and do not want to change. Such ones will almost certainly persecute the followers of Jesus. Persecution and tribulations come to Christ's followers. Sadly, some of these followers give up on

following Jesus as a result.

Some seed lands on soil which had thorns growing out of it. The seed sprouted but was choked out by these surrounding thorns. Jesus tells us that the thorns represent the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. This is another sad situation which repeats itself in every generation. Some people respond positively to Jesus' word and I believe are converted but they do not attend to their spiritual life or continue following Jesus simply because they are too busy with other things. What things are these? The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. They are absorbed with their riches, fashion, careers, sports, possessions and lives. The love of riches can be a terrible snare and we are warned elsewhere in scripture. (see 1 Timothy 6:10).

The last type of soil that Jesus tells us about is "good ground" This is the one who "... that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." This is the one who really understands Jesus' message and accepts it. Understanding Jesus' message also means understanding that we must surrender our whole life to Him. Such a one who does this finds a beautiful spirituality birthed within himself and sprouting out of him are the fruits of God's Spirit. Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. This is the victorious Christian, one who has God's fruit growing out of him reproducing a hundred-fold, sixty-fold or thirty-fold. This is the victorious Christian, the one who stays a follower of Christ for life.

So friend, how is it with you? What kind of soil is your heart? Jesus' word calls us to surrender our lives to Him. He died for your sins and mine so that we can be set free and received into God's family. He rose from the dead. Now His gospel calls us to believe and to repent of our self-rule. It calls us to surrender to God and start over this time following His way. How is your heart to Christ's call? Do you hear it or do you block it out immediately? Are you excited about following as long as it does not create waves with your friends, family or employer? Are you willing to follow even if it means abandoning your

pathway to material wealth?

What if even now the seed of Jesus' word is landing on your heart and there is conviction and recognition of sin. What will you do with this seed? Have you received it? Have you settled the matter? The seed of Jesus' gospel, together with God's Spirit, has all of the power to produce in you spiritual life which can be fruitful for the duration of your life and into eternity. There is no defect in the seed. How is your heart to receive the seed? Are you preoccupied? Do other things or other people have your heart? Could it be that the devil has you too busy to look at your soul, your death, your judgment, your eternity? Could it be, friend, that you have been too busy to consider, and accept, the life-giving gospel of Christ? Are you too busy to go streaming on busy and absorbed with the cares of this life while the seed of the gospel lays on the surface of your heart? There it lays, not yet plucked up by birds. Not yet scorched by sun or choked by weeds. However, time does not stand still. You must decide for Christ, or against Him.

Friend, will you stop and think about your fleeting life, your dying bed, your judgment bar? Friend, you can have all of your sins forgiven if you will believe in Jesus' gospel, and come to Him for salvation, beseeching His mercy and surrendering your life to Him. What is the opposite of coming to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and conversion? It is paying for your own sins on Judgment Day. Friend, the Bible warns you against such a fate. Do not let your sins pile up to a towering mountain. On the day of judgment the mountain of wrath will come down on unforgiven sin (unforgiven by God.) If you are running from God you are making this mountain higher, blacker, and more dreadful every day. The mountain will come down upon runners like the walls of water did on Pharaoh and his host as they attempted to cross the Red Sea. Friend, this need not be your fate. Your sins can be forgiven and your heart be freed. Jesus paid for your sins and mine on the cross, and He rose again. Now you must believe in this truth. Come to Jesus in prayer and make a full surrender to Him. Let Him have your life. There will be tribulations and persecutions will come but your life will be filled with spiritual fruit, with beautiful fruit.

Fruit of love, joy, peace, etc. will be growing out of you. You will have God's approval. Choose this for your own life. The decision rests with you. Approach God in prayer.

Pray with your own words or, if you need help, I offer this prayer for your soul.

Lord Jesus, I come to You, seeing my need. I am a lost soul and the ground of my heart has been hard and barren. Today a seed of truth has landed upon my heart. It is the truth that You love me and that You died for my sins. It is the truth that You rose from the dead. It is the truth that I can be forgiven and become Your follower. Jesus I choose to receive this seed. I choose to repent and put my faith in You. I want to have a relationship with You. Forgive all of my sins. I commit my life to following You. Thank You. Amen.

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