

All In

This topic popped into my head last Sabbath. Sometimes advanced notice on what to share for study comes in a dream and it did during the week. When I think of “all in,” I think of the James Bond movie Casino Royale. In this movie it is a high stakes poker tournament and the buy in is \$10 million per player. The last hand played pitted James Bond against the villain and they both go all in. This means that they're pushing all of their chips into the middle for their bet. As usual the good guy wins.

God doesn't want us playing poker. Our salvation is not a gamble but a sure thing as we have His promises to us in His Word. While His love for us is unconditional, there are conditions on our place in His Kingdom in one of two resurrections. We know what they are from our studies over the past several years. God wants our love, devotion, and obedience to His Word and not an edited version of worshipping Him our way. For us if we go all in which is what God wants us to do we can't keep a poker chip in our pocket. We can't be holding on to something of the world and expect to get his grace and blessings.

If we examine the definitions found in the Free Dictionary, “**all in**” is defined as fully committed to a task or endeavor, giving or prepared to give all of one’s energy or resources towards something. To further support this, Miriam-Webster’s dictionary also defines “all in” as being fully committed to or involved in something. To be fully committed means that we’re giving **all** of ourselves and **all** of our hearts. Jesus Christ gave his life for **all** of us to pay for our sins. If God did not want all of us in return perhaps Christ did not to be sacrificed. But that wasn’t the case as He *gave* his entire being as we are to do in return out of the love we have for Him in our hearts.

We can find an example of someone going all in the Book of Mark; the widow who gave two coins as an offering. It was **all** she had. Such a simple act but it was significant in itself for Jesus to use her as an example and to be written down in scripture. It exemplifies “all in.” There is nothing else written about the woman other than she was a poor widow. She gave all she had. This is not a lesson on tithing but on the condition of the heart. There’s that heart thing again.

Mark 12:38-42- “And He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who take pleasure in walking around in robes, and in salutations in the

marketplaces, And in the chief seats in the synagogues and the chief places in the feasts, Who devour the houses of widows, and for a pretext make long prayers. These shall receive the greater condemnation.” And after sitting down opposite the temple treasury, He observed how the people were casting money into the treasury; and many rich ones were putting in much. And one poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins, which is equal to one copper coin. Then He called His disciples to Him and said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all of those who are casting money into the treasury. For everyone else contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her destitution put in as much as she had, giving all her living.”

Luke 21:1-4- “When He looked up, He saw the rich men casting their offerings into the treasury. Then He also saw a certain poor widow drop in two small coins. And He said, “Of a truth, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; For all these have from their abundance cast into the offerings to God; but she, out of her poverty, did put in all the livelihood that she had.”

The poor woman’s act is a contrast to the rich man who asked Jesus what must he do to have eternal life in Matthew 19.

Matthew 19:16-22- “Now at that time, one came to Him *and* said, “Good Master, what good *thing* shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” And He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good except one—God. But if you desire to enter into life, keep the commandments.” Then he said to Him, “Which?” And Jesus said, ” ‘You shall not commit murder’; ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ‘You shall not steal’; ‘You shall not bear false witness’; ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” The young man said to Him, “I have kept all these things from my youth. What do I yet lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you desire to be perfect, go *and* sell your property, and give to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come *and* follow Me.” But after hearing this word, the young man went away grieving, because he had many possessions.”

This man’s focus was on *himself* and his possessions. This is the obstacle that holds so many back from stepping through the door and being ***fully committed*** to God’s Way of life. People hold on to what they have for fear of *giving up* something of value. Perhaps it is wealth or possessions but more often than not its friends and family that hold them back from pressing through. But we have several examples of how God responds to those who ***do*** press through by their faith in Him.

Matthew 9:20-22- “And behold, a woman who had been *afflicted* with a flow of blood *for* twelve years, after coming behind *Him*, touched the hem of His garment. For she said within herself, “If only I shall touch His garment, I shall be healed.” But Jesus turned; and seeing the woman, He said to her, “Be of good courage, daughter; your faith has made you whole.” And from that hour the woman was healed.”

Matthew 14:35-36- “And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent to all the country around; and they brought to Him all those who were sick. And *they* besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched *it* were healed.”

Mark 6:55-56- “Then they ran through all the country around and began to carry those who were sick on stretchers, *taking them* wherever they heard that He was. And wherever He entered into villages or cities or fields, they laid in the marketplaces those who were sick; and they besought Him that they might only touch the border of His garment; and all those who touched Him were healed.”

And then the paralytic on the mat...

Mark 2:3-5- “Then they came to Him, bringing a paraplegic borne by four *men*. And since they were not able to come near to Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was; and after breaking *it* open, they let down the stretcher on which the paraplegic was lying. Now when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paraplegic, “Child, your sins have been forgiven you.”

Luke 5:18-20- “And behold, men came, carrying on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; and they sought to bring him in and place him before Him. But when they could not find a way to bring him in because of the multitude, they went up on the rooftop and lowered him with the stretcher through the tiles into the midst, directly in front of Jesus. And seeing their faith, He said to him, “Man, your sins have been forgiven you.”

God wants *all of us* to press through the trials and storms to get to Him. It is our love, faith, and devotion to Him that will take us through. We are here to grow in these things and beyond for what lies ahead.

People say they believe in God and know His truth without fully committing to living it. “Christian” is such a universal term that is bandied about without fully comprehending what it means to actually be one. “*Following*” in the footsteps of

Jesus is *different from* “*walking*” in the footsteps of Jesus. To be a Christian, we *must do* as Christ did and keep God’s Commandments and Holy Days. If they were truly “done away with” as we discussed last week, Christ would have told us so and from scripture it is quite the opposite.

Many make a half-hearted effort at keeping His Sabbaths and Holy Days, believing that an occasional appearance is sufficient. Christmas and Easter are two annual appearances by most protestants. Showing up to a building is *NOT* the requirement. *Remembering the Sabbath* and *keeping it Holy is the Commandment*. Staying in contact with other believers and fellowshiping is what yields spiritual growth. Iron sharpens iron...(Proverbs 27:17). Too many churches “play church” developing a “club” mentality that is bent on attendance and numbers. The focus is on a hierarchy and crowded pews and entertaining the people rather than the worship of God and His Word.

Matthew 23:27-28- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful *on the* outside, but within are full of the bones of the dead, and of all uncleanness. Likewise, you also outwardly appear to men *to be* righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

We can liken a church to a spiritual restaurant where those seeking God's truth go to be filled with a "spiritual meal." If the shepherds fail to "feed the flock" according to God's Word, they will seek another "restaurant." Many "believers" participate in "church hopping" as they seek to be accommodated rather than enlightened by the Word of God. Seeking religion rather than righteousness, those with itching ears desire to be entertained more than knowing God.

2 Timothy 4:2-5- "Preach the Word! Be urgent in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, encourage, with all patience and doctrine. For there shall come a time when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but according to their own lusts they shall accumulate to themselves a *great number of* teachers, having ears itching to hear what satisfies their cravings; And they shall turn away their own ears from the truth; and they shall be turned aside unto myths. But *as for* you, be vigilant in all things, endure hardships, do *the* work of an evangelist; fully carry out your ministry."

For this reason, the shepherds will be held to a higher standard.

Jeremiah 23:1-2- "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture," says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against

the shepherds who feed My people, “You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings,” says the LORD.”

Ezekiel 34:2-4- “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you kill the fat ones, but *you* do not feed the flock. You have not made the weak strong, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty.”

Pastor or member, hanging onto something usually has its roots in pride. It may not be blatantly obvious, maybe quite simple doubt. We must not be self-serving in our service to God and others. Jesus never preached Jesus nor did He try and get noticed and draw attention to Himself.

Matthew 8:1-4- “When He came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if.

You will, You have the power to cleanse me.” Then Jesus stretched out *His* hand *and* touched him, saying, “I will. Be cleansed.” And immediately *he was* cleansed *from* his leprosy. And Jesus said to him, “**See that you tell no one**; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a witness to them.”

Mark 1:42-44- “And as soon as He had spoken, the leprosy immediately departed from him, and he was cleansed. Now after strictly commanding him, He sent him away at once, And said to him, “**See that you do not say anything to anyone**; but go *and* show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”

Jesus did nothing of His own. He was fully committed to the will of God the Father, He was “**all in**” (**John 5:30, John 8:28**). He gave all glory to God the Father.

I Corinthians 10:31- “Therefore, whether you eat, or you drink, or you do anything, **do all things to the glory of God.**”

Colossians 3:23-24- “And whatever you do, do heartily, as to the Lord and not to men; Knowing that you shall receive from *the* Lord the recompense of the inheritance, for you are serving Christ the Lord.”

When we go “all in,” and step into the water for baptism, we are making that fully committed contract to God and His way of life. Baptism does not grant us membership into any manmade club or organization. It does make us enter into a covenant agreement with God and His way of life. We become a member of His Family and heirs to His promises. We accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins and devote our lives to Him. We die to ourselves and there is no turning back.

Luke 9:62- “But Jesus said to him, “No one who sets his hand to the plow, and looks back at the things behind, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Romans 14:7-9- “For no one among us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we should live unto the Lord; and if we die, we should die unto the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. *It is* for this very purpose *that* Christ both died and rose and is living again, so that He might be Lord over both *the* dead and *the* living.”

The storms and trials we face are mostly brought about by our own folly but are for building or guiding us in the spiritual direction God has planned for us. Wisdom comes into play when we can recognize them as such and learn and grow according to His will.

Ephesians 4:3-6- “Being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body and one Spirit, even as you were also called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, Who *is* over all, and through all, and ***in you all.***”

Our intimate relationship with God needs to focus on our absolute submission to His will and our salvation depends on our obedience to His Word. If you are having difficulties, trials and storms or your prayers do not seem to “get through,” check your pockets, you may have a poker chip you held onto when you went “all in.” Amen.

