

Life, Fortunes, Sacred Honor

Commitment

John W. Ritenbaugh

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I do not know if you have ever thought of our calling in this way but we are on the cutting edge of the preparatory stage for the most awesome and meaningful revolution that mankind has ever seen. Some of you may have heard the sermon that I gave on the sixth century BBC axial period, as I called it. I used the term axial in order to help us understand that what I was talking about was an axle of history.

An axle is a shaft on which something turns, and in this case the axle of history was about to turn in a tremendous revolution. Whenever that occurred in the fifth to the sixth century BBC—the most tumultuous period of time in the history of this earth in terms of overthrowing of governments, old nations falling prey to revolutions within them, and new nations arising—by the time the sixth century BBC was done entirely, two new nations were dominating the history of this earth.

We are right on the cutting edge of a far more tumultuous period and when that period is over and the axle of history turns once again, I hope then that we are not just on the forefront of the preparatory stages of that, but rather that we are on the cutting edge of the government that has taken over the rulership of this earth.

Now not only are nations going to rise and fall and governments change in the next few years, but also people are going to change in the most profound way possible and when the pain of revolution is over you are going to find that people's hearts are softened, that there is peace, that there is a prosperity beginning to occur, and all this is going to be established *without* the presence of war.

All of us know that Jesus prophesied that we are going to hear of wars and rumors of war. I think you will agree with me and anyone else that wants to talk about it, that the nations today are aflame with revolution. Some of them have been have been virtually bloodless, like the one that took place in Czechoslovakia where the nation split in two and the Czechs went their way and the Slovaks went their way. But most of them have not been bloodless.

Most of them have been bloody, some have been almost bloody to the max, like the one in what was formerly Yugoslavia between the Serbs and the Croats and the Bosnians. Just before that, the eastern block of nations formerly behind the Iron Curtain split up and broke off away from Russia. Even today we are seeing Russia having another

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crisis. I have not heard any news about it today so I do not know if it has been resolved, whether Boris Yeltsin has been able to re-entrench himself in power once again.

In Georgia, another republic of the former Soviet Union, Eduard Shevardnadze had to flee the capital city because people are revolting there. I do not know if you are aware but part of Romania wants to break away and they want to be joined with Hungary because at one time it was part of Hungary. They feel that their roots are in Hungary, so they are beginning to stir the pot, things are simmering, and they are trying to break away from there.

In South Africa, you know what is happening there I think pretty well. India, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Sudan, and other nations in Africa, especially those that are in the western part of Africa, where various ethnic groups are heatedly stirring the fervor of the people as they push against the system that is entrenched in their nation. They are trying to gain for themselves what they feel is a greater measure of liberty.

Now our own nation, 217 years ago, declared its independence from Britain and won that independence after quite a bitter struggle and a great deal of hardship. It took almost 7 or 8 years for it to unravel and finally came to a conclusion in 1783, I believe it was.

In the week of July 4, 1976, I heard a radio broadcast by Paul Harvey that really impacted on my memory. I have never forgotten it because I felt that he had a message that was very appropriate for the church, because we are on the cutting edge of the greatest revolution that is ever going to take place on the face of this earth. I think that it is good for every one of us to understand the message that Paul Harvey had, the message that he gleaned from the leadership or the lives of the leadership of the United States of America when they declared their independence from Britain.

You have probably not read the Declaration of Independence since you were in high school and maybe you did not even read it even then. I can recall reading it and I can remember maybe the first line—the preamble of the Declaration of Independence. I can remember hardly anything else that appears within it.

Most political figures feel that it is one of the finest documents in man's history and certainly the United States of America has its philosophical roots contained within the words of the Declaration of Independence. It is only several hundred words long, you can read it in just a few minutes, but its construction did not come easily.

Do you even know who the author of the Declaration of Independence was? It was

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Thomas Jefferson. It is only a little over two hundred words long but do you know how long it took him to write those two hundred words? Seventeen days. He struggled over it, trying to get everything just right, and then after seventeen days it still had to meet the criticisms of the other men who were involved in making that declaration to King George III.

It was finally ratified on July the fourth and it is interesting to note that revolutions are normally instigated by men who have little or nothing to lose, but our Founding Fathers had everything to lose and almost nothing to gain except liberty. You probably cannot even remember anybody who signed the Declaration of Independence except for one man whose name graces right in the middle—the flowery name there that I will not say because you know it, but there is an insurance company named after him.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence were men of means. Twenty-four of them were either lawyers or judges, nine of them were plantation owners, all the rest of them were prosperous business men, and some of them were downright filthy rich! They were the Walton's (of Wal-Mart fame) of their day. If their money was put into today's equation, some of them would be billionaires.

Now you may not be able to quote a single line of the Declaration, but those men knew that when they signed that, they were going to light the fuse that was going to set off the dynamite, and that it was very possible that they were going to lose their fortunes, and perhaps even their lives.

There is one line, it is in the final paragraph, and it is this line that henceforth I want you to remember because it has application to us. It says, "We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

It is very interesting in considering what these men had to lose in doing what they were doing. Jesus never hid from His followers that what they were going to be committing themselves to was something that was going to be very difficult. He never promised an easy way and He frequently let those who were going to be His followers know that it was going to be tough, that what He was asking us to commit to was not going to be the easy, broad way. It was going to be hard if we were really going to commit ourselves to it. Or were we just going to commit ourselves nominally to something that was just a passing fancy.

In Matthew 7 He says:

Matthew 7:14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which

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leads to life, and there are few who find it.

“Difficult the way.” Let us look at another one.

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

That is a pretty stiff term! Now we all understand that it does not mean literally hate. It means to love less by comparison; to be willing to put mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, and any other relative that we might have, secondary to Christ; that if there ever comes a time when our obedience is going to be in question we have to make a choice between either following Christ, or following the family. That choice is not going to be easy.

Do you know that there is a cliché everyone of us, I think, is aware of, “blood is thicker than water.” Do you know where that came from? That came out of the Renaissance period; it came out of the Protestant Reformation. What it means is family ties are stronger than the Holy Spirit. Do you believe that? It was a cliché that was penned by ministers who saw people turn away from the reformation, because family ties—blood—was more important to them than the truth of God.

I know that you all understand what I am talking about, because all of you, in most cases, have difficulty breaking away from another congregation of the church of God. You have difficulty because you did not want to break your ties with friends, you did not want to break your ties with family, there were people that you loved very deeply, people that you had good times fellowshiping with, and you knew that if you stepped away from that organization it was possible that you would not have any fellowship any longer and there might be a long period of time before you are able to fellowship with others who thought the same way that you do.

I know that even now there are some of you that wish that you had a great deal more opportunity to fellowship than you do. Fellowship is very important, but I think that one of the things that God is testing us on is to see whether or not we are willing to stand alone with Him. That is not easy.

Now see if this next scripture does not sound like one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Luke 18:28 Then Peter said, “see, we have left all and followed You.”

Now those fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence were well-educated men. They were men who thought big. You do not become wealthy the way they were wealthy without having big ideas. Many of these men were of the kind whose operations stretched over into Europe, France, England, and when they declared war on England, they were putting in jeopardy their properties over there, because they knew very well that if they owned ships or warehouses or any kind of retail establishment, houses or whatever, those things were going to be confiscated immediately.

Above that, they knew that if they did what they did that King George III was not going to be happy because he had already declared to the colonies that if you did anything like this you are going to be considered a traitor, and as a traitor you are going to be guilty of treason, and if your were guilty of treason you were going to be hung.

They were so concerned that the signer’s identities—even though it was announced to the colonies—were hidden for two months to give them a chance to hide, to allow them time to get back home to their families and begin to put the pieces together, because they understood that things were going to explode.

In the first confusing months after the announcement of that declaration, these people were not sure who was a friend and who was an enemy. There were those who were loyal to King George III who were neighbors of the people who were declaring that they were free of King George III.

Now their fears were justified, because almost every one of them lost everything. You have probably never heard of Carter Braxton. He was a very wealthy planter and a trader. He was one of these men that I alluded to, he had properties in England, in France, he owned ships that went back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean taking some of his own goods, cotton, tobacco, and things that were grown over here.

He used his ships in the revolutionary cause and he lost them, they all got sunk, either in storms or by the British. So in order to pay his debt, because he did business just like modern day people do business, in order to buy the ships he borrowed the money from the bank, he financed it that way. But when war was over he had to sell all of his properties in order to pay the debt because now the bankers could not collect the ships because they did not exist anymore. He went absolutely broke and he died in rags.

Vandals looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Gwinnett, Walton, Hayward,

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Rutledge, and Middleton. Thomas Nelson raised \$2 million—can you imagine how much that would be today?—on his own signature in order to outfit the French Navy that were going to fight for the Americans. Well, after the war, he personally paid back the loans and he wiped out his entire estate. The American government never paid him one cent for what he contributed.

It went even further that, because guess where Thomas Nelson lived? He lived in Yorktown, and if you remember where the Revolutionary War ended, it ended in Yorktown. Guess whose house General Cornwallis used as his headquarters? Thomas Nelson's! You know what Thomas Nelson told George Washington to do? He told him to destroy the house, blow it up, and George did, and Nelson lost his house. Everything was wiped out, he was never repaid. Nobody even knows where he is buried. He just died, and they put him in a hole in the ground because by this time there was no family, nothing.

Richard Stockton was captured, tortured so that his health was broken, and his estate was pillaged. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside while she lay dying. Their thirteen children fled in all directions. His wealth was produced by planting and he had a gristmill; his fields were burned and the gristmill was burned down. For more than a year he lived in the forest and caves and then he returned home after the war ended. He found out that his wife was dead, his children were gone, the family was never reunited, his properties were destroyed, his heart was broken. He died a couple of weeks later. There was nothing left.

Nine of the fifty-six died directly from the war. Many of them were tortured, their health broken. Almost every one of them lost their fortunes. Nobody received a single cent of compensation from the government. You know it is not so with us. Let us look at verse 29 here:

Luke 18:29-30 So He said unto them, assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come everlasting life.”

Now do you see yourself preparing for a new age to come, a new birth of liberty such as this world has never seen? Are you ready to commit yourself to it? Are you willing to go as far as these men did for their understanding of what liberty meant?

I can remember a place in Los Angeles, just outside of Glendale where the Los Angeles

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River comes alongside the Ventura freeway. You can look out into the cement-sided Los Angeles River and there is graffiti all over it. But there was one thing that so frequently caught Evelyn's and my eye, in big letters, for anybody who was on the Ventura freeway heading west out of Los Angeles could see. It said, "The revolution is coming."

We looked at that, year after year, as we went by that place. How right it is, the revolution is coming, but it is not one that we are going to bring about, it is one that God is going to bring about. But He has enlisted us so that we will be ready when that revolution occurs.

Our part in this right now is to be committed to what we know surely is going to occur. Have you committed your life, your fortune, your sacred honor to your Elder Brother, Jesus Christ? Have you been giving Him the time, the energy, and the submission needed for Him to prepare you? He said that He goes and prepares a place for us, and that where He is there we may be also, and He is going to be here directing the revolution. Now, will we be prepared?

There is an interesting statement made by James in James 3:

James 3:13-14 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

Do you have bitter envy and self-seeking heart? Do you think the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence were self-seeking? They sacrificed their all so that their fellow countrymen could have liberty, because they were the cream of the crop of the colonies.

James 3:15-18 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. [Now here is the verse that I am aiming for] Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those that make peace.

The point of this is that it takes a certain environment to produce what God wants, and

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what God wants is not an environment of war among His people. Are you offended about something? Envy, bitterness, self-seeking. Do you think that is producing the kind of environment necessary to be prepared for the Kingdom of God? Are you really on the cutting edge of preparation or are you holding up the ship because of bad attitudes?

We can all be guilty, but if we are ever going to be prepared, it is going to be because we love God and because we love each other and we are not afraid to show that love and we are not afraid to help and we are not afraid to serve and we are not afraid to humble ourselves and admit that we were wrong and we are willing to change. God wants to change our heart because that is the seed to the actions. If we are willing to have our hearts changed, we will be prepared.

What does it say in James 4:1? I just want to mention it here, because war comes up in the context, and the very thing that James is pointing out here is that war is the wrong kind of environment to get prepared for the Kingdom of God in. What God wants is peace and when there is peace you know what that means? It means that you can concentrate on overcoming and growing. You can concentrate on loving one another because you are not concentrating on defending yourself. I know I am asking for something that is a awfully hard, but God gives us a lot of time and He is patient with us but there has never been a better time or place to start.

I said in the announcement that we are here to learn to solve problems in a good attitude. It is one of the reasons that God convenes the Feast of Tabernacles.

Just before we came down here, I heard a quote from a person that I believe was a preacher but I am not positive, but he said, "I have never witnessed a person prepared *by* the crisis they found themselves in; rather, those who overcame the crisis did so *because* they were prepared when the crisis arose." There is wisdom in that statement. Christ is preparing us brethren, to take care of the greatest crisis that will ever arise on the face of the earth! Do you realize that?

Last time a crisis like that arose, God just summarily executed everybody in the Flood and that was the solution to the problem. But He has already told us this time He is not going to do that, He is going to let the problem go on and on until we are just about ready to wipe ourselves off the face of the earth! Then He will step in, but by that time He will have a group of people prepared to handle the minds, the attitudes, the psyches of those people who are coming out of that terrible period of time. We are going to be prepared because we have gone through, in principle, some of the very problems that these people are going to be facing, only on a much smaller and more moderate scale.

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We will understand what is involved. We will understand their heart, their mind, their thinking, and we will be able to help. We will be able to give them comfort, and give them a kick in the butt if they need it too. We will correct them, we will console them, we will love them to death, we will spank their behinds, but they will come out of that knowing that we love them, and that even when there is correction, it is done in love, a good attitude, and in kindness, and it is done trying to build them up, and help them to overcome a difficulty.

All that a crisis does is prove the preparation. And if we flunk, it shows that we were not ready. When we do those things, it is proof that we need to go through it again. I hope that is not discouraging. God does not give up. If we flunk, He takes us back through it again and again until we finally get through it, then we can go on. In the meantime, we have learned a great deal.

Hebrews 10:32-34 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings; partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

That is why those fifty-six signers of the Declaration did what they did. They believed that they would be able to accomplish the liberation of the colonies and so they committed everything to it; they put everything on the line and they lost it, including their lives, but liberty was born of a degree, of a kind, that perhaps the world has never seen up until this time.

Hebrews 10:35-36 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

It is interesting that the picture in verse 35 is of cowardly men throwing away their shields and running from battle. Those signers of the Declaration did not run; they signed it all the way, even when they were secure in their prosperity. They had everything to lose, they paid the price, and freedom was born. Do you know what that shows? That they were prepared to do what they did. I would not be at all surprised that God brought those men to the fore, and maybe even gave them their wealth and their

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training, in order that Manasseh could break away from Ephraim.

Now compare yourself to these men. We have very little to lose in the way of material things as those men did, but God's way does demand a commitment of time, energy, and submission, and even there we have to understand that spiritually, the psalmist said that we are, at our best state, altogether vanity. So what does that mean? Unlike the colonists, we have everything to gain and nothing to lose. As a matter of fact, our side *cannot* lose, because we serve the Lord Christ.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of rejuvenation, of reorientation, of rededication. It is a time to get us all headed in the same direction as God's work, and God's work, according to Psalm 74:12, is that He is "working salvation in all of the earth."

God is a great creator and the work *He* is doing is reproducing Himself. The work *He* is doing is the work of God. He is creating in His children godly character, so God's work then is preparing and qualifying people to work under Jesus Christ.

Now the major issue is given to us in Hebrews 12:14. He says:

Hebrews 12:14 pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

That is interesting, to me anyway. I have a thing about holiness as you are probably finding out.

Holiness is nothing but being like God. God is holy! He says, without holiness no one will see God. Does that not seem to you that that is the issue, becoming holy? I will be talking a lot more about that as we go along through the Feast of Tabernacles.

The issue is becoming holy, or in another term, going on to perfection. Holiness is perfection. Another way to put it is, growing to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now we have three synonyms here: the issue is holiness, the issue is perfection, the issue is growing to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The issue is being prepared for the Kingdom of God.

Satan is trying his hardest to wage war against these preparations continuing, because he knows that he has but a short time before he is unseated from his position of power. Our part is to commit ourselves to allow God to work in us. So take the pledge as we begin the Feast of Tabernacles this year, to give your life, your fortunes, your sacred

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honor to the cause of Almighty God and His Son, Jesus Christ.