



If Anyone Would Come After Me

By Jeff Bedwell on January 13, 2022

READING: Luke 9

A disciple of Christ is a follower of Christ, not just someone who professes faith in Christ. Discipleship is not simply a door to be entered, but a path to be followed. In Luke 9:23, Jesus lays out what it looks like to come after Him. These three admonitions are not optional nor chronological, but they are a blend that is to be found in every person who truly believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The three spiritual realities are:

1. **Deny Self.** This is not just self-denial although that is included. It is a denying of any hint of self-rule and self-righteousness. You give up all dependence on yourself, all trust in your own goodness and righteousness, all confidence in who you are by nature apart from Christ.
2. **Take Up His Cross.** There have been many strange and sometimes wacky things people have tried to say is their “cross to bear.” When Jesus said “*Take up our cross,*” the original hearers would only think of one thing: horrible suffering, pain and death. Jesus is saying, this is how extreme your devotion must be, this is a willingness to endure persecution, hatred, hostility, rejection, reproach, shame, suffering, even death for the name of Christ. The calling was to be ready to do it every day. Walter J. Chantry wrote, Death on a cross is a slow death, but it is a certain one: “death to self-importance, self-satisfaction, self-absorption, self-advancement, self-dependence. . . . Death to self-interest because you serve Christ’s honor!”
3. **Follow Me.** This is a call to a continual pattern of obedience--to follow Christ’s commands and example in all the relationships and circumstances of my life. Jesus said, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*” (John 14:15, ESV). God’s grace does not relieve me of the responsibility to obey Christ’s commands; grace gives me the capacity to obey Christ’s commands.

We can only ever hope to walk in this way by God’s saving, transforming and empowering grace. Paul wrote, “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:12–13, ESV).

Jesus’ challenging words give a very different description of what it means to be a genuine follower of Jesus Christ than what is commonly referred to as faith today. “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21, ESV).

Let us take to heart these words of Luke 9:23 to allow God’s Holy Spirit to examine our hearts and lives to see if we are genuinely following Christ. Not to try to “earn” our salvation by works,

but the fruit of our life that gives evidence of the reality of salvation and the activity of God's grace in our lives.

PRAYER: *Father, I desperately need Your saving, transforming, empowering grace moment by moment, day by day. Help me find true life through You by denying self, taking up my cross daily and following Christ joyfully and completely.*

TOMORROW'S READING: Luke 10

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