

Introduction:

1. Once more we revisit Luke 9:23. We come to the end of this verse, but not to the end of this series on being devoted to Jesus.
 - a. At the end of the verse we have the simplest statement of all that Jesus gives in this section.
 - b. “Follow Me” is blunt, direct and to the point. The statement is short, simple and easily understood. To follow Jesus is to do what He says. He is the Lord; we are His disciples. Disciples do what their Lord says, Luke 6:46.
 - c. Disciples do not put conditions on doing what their Lord says. They do not say to Jesus, “I will obey you if it is not too hard...if I have time...if none of my friends object...etc.”
 - d. Is that really following Jesus? You and I both know it is not. And yet that is the kind of discipleship that is commonly accepted and practiced among most people who claim to follow Jesus.
 - e. Let it never be said that we follow Jesus in that way. In fact, that is not following Jesus at all.
2. Let us explore some things that the Lord intended when He said, “Follow Me.”

The Lesson:**I. Following Jesus is about Conviction not Compromise.**

- A. Disciples of Jesus have convictions about right and wrong, about standards dictated to us by Jesus. We must be people of conviction because our Lord said we must be. We must be people who are committed to believing and doing the will of God, Matthew 7:21.
- B. This is critical because we live in an age of compromise. The world likes to dictate to us what we should believe and how we should be tolerant of other people and their beliefs.
 1. The world tells us that we do not have a right to believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven. If Jesus was wrong in what He said in John 14:6, then He is not to be believed at all. It is amazing that the world tells us to be tolerant of every belief and practice under the sun, but is not tolerant toward us when we say Jesus is the only way to heaven. The world says we should let others believe whatever they want, but then tells us that we can't believe what we want—the very words of Jesus. Why not? Because it is politically incorrect.
 2. The world wants us to be tolerant of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia—but the world refuses to be tolerant of our opposition to those practices.
 3. When the world asks us to be tolerant, it is actually asking us to compromise. It does not ask us to leave those people alone and not bother them (as though we could physically force them to abandon their practices), it asks us to accept those practices as legitimate, normal and proper. It asks us to do the very thing God said we must not do in Isaiah 5:20. We dare not call evil good. Nor will we go along with calling the good words of Jesus evil.
 4. We not only have conviction on moral issues, if we claim that we follow Jesus, then we must have conviction on baptism (Mark 16:16), the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28), the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18), and a dozen other critical teachings of Jesus.
- C. Following Jesus is not, and has never been, a spineless yielding to the beliefs and practices of others. What is often mistakenly labeled as “tolerance” is nothing more or less than compromise; it is a selling out of the very words of Jesus; it is to become a traitor to His cause.
 1. Rather, following Jesus means to take a militant stand for the truth and to declare that some things are right because Jesus said they are right, and that some things are wrong because Jesus said they are wrong.
 2. The “peace” that is so often exploited as “Christian” by those who are not Christians was not compromise in order to get along. It was a “let not your heart be troubled” peace that was based on the firm conviction that following Jesus leads to heaven!

II. Following Jesus is about Commitment not Convenience.

- A. Disciples of Jesus have made a commitment to serve Jesus. They continue to serve Jesus and follow Him because they are committed to Him. He is their Lord. They do not serve Him because it is convenient to do so.
- B. This is critical because we live in an age of convenience. We speak of the coffee maker, the microwave, and a hundred other things as “modern conveniences.” When something is convenient, we mean it is the easy thing to do; it involves less work and less trouble. Things that

are convenient simply do not require as much effort or as much attention. Following Jesus is not about doing the convenient thing, Acts 14:22; 24:25.

1. It is convenient (the easy thing to do) to be conformed to this world, but followers of Jesus are committed to the renewing of the mind, Romans 12:1-2.
 2. It is always more convenient to miss worship services rather than be present, but followers of Jesus are committed to worshipping Him, Hebrews 10:25.
 3. It is convenient to sleep late on Sunday morning and come in late to Bible class, or even to miss class altogether. It takes diligent commitment to get up on time, 2 Timothy 2:15.
 4. It is convenient to spend all our money the way we want to, but followers of Jesus are committed to giving freely and generously to the Lord, 2 Corinthians 9:7.
 5. It is convenient to be lazy, careless and sloppy about God's work, but followers of Jesus are committed to excellence because they are committed to Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15:58.
- C. We are not to be like water. Water takes the path of least resistance—the convenient way. It always flows downhill, doesn't it? That's not the direction followers of Jesus are headed. Because we are committed to Jesus ours is typically an uphill battle—that's the right direction!

III. Following Jesus is about Courage not Comfort

- A. Comfort feels good. That's why we call it comfort. One of the most comfortable feelings in the world is to pull those covers tight in a warm bed on a cold morning. One man said "God made Saturday morning for sleeping in." As much as we might like comfortable things, God did not call us to be comfortable, but to be courageous.
- B. But the problem is we live in a culture where comfort is the aim and ambition of most people. We are a people who seek comfortable things. People pay \$10,000 for a Sleep Number bed so they can get a comfortable night's rest. We live in air conditioned comfort. And we avoid things that are uncomfortable. But a love of comfort cannot guide us in following Jesus.
1. It makes me uncomfortable to speak to my neighbor about the Lord. The very least I can do is invite him to worship. That simple act (though it may require a little courage to speak) may be the beginning of making a disciple, Matthew 28:19.
 2. It may be comfortable to just quit on the Lord, to give up. There are times when it takes great courage to continue on. When friends, enemies or relatives give us a hard time because we are Christians, we may be tempted to take the easy way out and just give up. It takes courage to continue in the Lord's way. God promises blessing to those who are courageous and continue in His way. See Joshua 1:7-9.
- C. Will we have critics? Of course we will. Everyone who has ever tried to serve the Lord has had critics, 2 Timothy 3:12. But it is not the critic who counts.
1. The prize doesn't go to the man in the stands who finds fault and criticizes the player on the field. It is the man in the arena, who survives the conflict, who doesn't take the comfort of the stands, who ultimately receives the credit.
 2. It is the man who gives his blood, sweat and tears, who spends himself courageously in the worthy cause of Christ that matters. Only he knows the victory of overcoming. The Lord will reward His courage, conviction and commitment. Only he is blessed.

IV. Following Jesus is about Caring not Complacency

- A. Complacency is a destroyer. Be complacent about termites and your house will fall down around you. Be complacent about the oil warning light and a \$3,000 engine job is down the road. Be complacent about the needs of your brothers and sisters in Christ and nothing good awaits you in eternity. We are a people who cannot be complacent.
1. Jesus tells us to care about the widows and fatherless among us, James 1:27.
 2. Jesus tells us to care about the sick, hungry and needy among our brethren, Matthew 25:35-40. I will leave it to you to read the terrible consequence of being complacent about needy brethren (Matthew 25:41-46).
- B. It takes nothing to be complacent. It takes a disciple to be caring.

Conclusion:

1. There is one word in our text in Luke 9:23 that we have not discussed—"daily."
2. All of the things in our text about self-denial, taking up the cross and following Jesus are to be done daily. Jesus does not call us to a one or two day a week religion. Have you answered His call?