Matthew 8:18-34 (E.V.G.) 51611

Things New and Old: Volume 31, Follow Me (8:18-34)

Read Matt. 8:18-34.

In Matt. 8 we have three cases, one of purposing to follow the Lord, one of drawing back from so doing, and one of genuine discipleship. Let us look a little into the details of each.

The Lord had just previously been engaged in acts of mercy and acts of power. Great multitudes had followed Him (ver. 1), attracted by His teaching, and the miracles which He did, But the Lord did not seek for such followers as these, for when He saw the multitudes He gave commandment to depart to the other side. (Ver. 18.)

It is now, after that the curious throng of followers (after their fashion) had been disposed of, that the Lord is open to deal with the truer and more real thing. In order to be a reed follower, one had to leave the multitude and seek the Person he desired to follow. So it is here.

“A certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Bold, words these, and confident. They remind us of Peter, as he declared, “Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death.” (Luke 22:33.) Well we know the end of Peter’s promise!

But how does the Lord meet this scribe? Does He reject his offer on account of his self-confidence, or does He at once accept him as a follower? Ah, no! The Lord Jesus was infinite wisdom, and He replied, in words that suited the scribe’s case, and would suit many a case today.

Dear child of God, does your heart long to follow the Lord Jesus? Do you desire to show your love for Him by casting in your lot with Him, down here? If these be your thoughts. He has precious words of encouragement for you. Search for yourself, and see how often He lovingly invites souls to follow Him.

But He is faithful and true in His love, and would not have you follow Him without knowing what such discipleship involves. True it is, that in casting in your lot with Him, you cast it in with the Son of God, the Anointed One, the One to whom alone belongs all power and glory. We shall see this brought out as we get further on in the chapter. But He is also the Son of man, the One acquainted with grief, the One who had not where to lay His head, the One than whom even the foxes and birds were better off. It is as such that He presents Himself to this scribe. (Ver. 20.)

Can you take your place with such an One? Do you see such beauty in Christ that, for His sake, you could share His rejection? He is in rejection now, and it is one of the gracious gifts of our God and Father, the privilege of being identified with Him at the present time, as we shall be, when the time comes for Him to be manifested in glory. (Phil. 1:29.) And how will it reward us for any loss we may have to bear down here for His sake, to see the Lords approving smile, and to hear Him say, “Well done!”

But let us pass on and see what we may learn from the next case. One comes to Him who was in a way a follower of the Lord (for he was one of His “disciples,” see verse 21), and makes a proposal: “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.”

It was as though he had said, “Lord, let me wait till my father is dead, till all that connects me to the earth is gone, and then I will come and follow thee.”

Again I address you, dear child of God. You have been redeemed at infinite cost by the blood of Christ; everything binding you to the earth and to this scene has been eternally severed by the death of the Savior. And you have died with Him. Buried with Him in baptism, you are risen again with Him, and are seated with Him in the heavenlies. As such you are in the world, in order to manifest to others what you actually are—a heavenly being. You are called to follow Him with whom you are associated, Will you not do so? Oh, my reader, is there anything in this poor world that keeps you back from doing so? Are you in any way fostering a link between yourself and the world that has cast out your Lord? If so, hear the Lord’s words: “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.”

The world all around us is dead in trespasses and sins. You were once so yourself. (Eph. 2:1.) Through God’s grace you have heard the voice of God’s Son, and have been awakened to life. (John 5:25.) Do not then, I beseech you, seek a place among the dead ones. Do not cling to what you have been saved from. Let the dead bury their dead, and come, follow Him who has given you life. Some of the results of following Him are to be found in the latter part of chapter viii., to which we will now pass on.

The Lord leads the way into a ship, and His disciples follow. This is true discipleship. Let us ever bear in mind what it is we have to follow. Not our own inclinations, not our own thoughts, nor even our consciences, but a divine Person, Christ. When He leads, let us not be slow to follow.

Thus the disciples did. In following the Lord into the ship, they took upon themselves all the consequences of being with Him. And what could result from that but their own blessing? Let us now see what some of the consequences were.

There arose a great tempest in the sea. The waters on which they had hitherto been sailing so smoothly, became rough and adverse; and of such magnitude was this storm that the ship was covered with the waves. Did they repent of ever having entered that vessel? Ah, if they did, there was no cause for it! For with them was the Lord, and if they had sunk, He would have sunk. They were in the same ship. The winds and

the waves were completely under His control. Why then did He not coerce them? Why did He not heed the fear of His companions? He was asleep! Had He forgotten? Was He not faithful?

In alarm, His disciples come to Him with “Lord, save us: we perish.” Had He forgotten? Hear His words, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”

Faithfulness to Christ will involve stormy waves and tempestuous winds. But remember, dear child of God, that though He seems to be asleep, though you seem left alone, yet He is in the very same ship as yourself, and that when, you sink, He sinks! What security His presence gives! The Lord, awaked by the distrustful cry of His disciples, arises, rebukes the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Now a “great calm” is not conducive to progress. Sec that vessel which was just now sailing along before the wind so swiftly, why is it so still? Why does it remain for days in one spot? Ask the captain of any of our large sailing vessels the reason, and he will tell you it is because the wind has dropped, and a great calm has taken its place.

Depend upon it, my reader, while you are going on with Jesus, however rough and stormy your way may be, there will be sure progress; but as soon as distrust comes in, and you become fearful and lose faith, though the Lord may smooth your troubled waters, yet progress comes to an end.

The disciples could only marvel at the power of the One who had done this, yet they did not recognize in Him the divine Son of God. Their thoughts did not rise beyond “What manner of man is this!” and, consequently, the Lord had to teach them a lesson. He suffers them to learn that He is Son of God from demon lips. (Ver. 29.) How humbling is this! Yet the disciples evidently learned their lesson, for when they found themselves in similar circumstances on another occasion, they, on witnessing His power, “Came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God.” (Chap, 14:33.)

Thus in Matt. 8 we get the Lord presented, as an object to be followed, both as Son of Man (ver. 20), and as such, subject to every hostile circumstance; and as Son of God, above all such circumstances. How blessed for us to know Him in each of these characters! Looking at Him thus, we behold a Person to whom every influence in this world is opposed; and, at the same time, One who has complete control over every circumstance down here. He calls us to share His path as the despised One, as we shall surely share His glory by-and-by. The question for each one of us is, “How am I responding to that call?”

In conclusion, I ask you, dear reader, to prayerfully weigh the following words of the Lord Jesus: “He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” (Matt. 10:38.)

“Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple,” (Luke 14:27.)

“Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33.)

May the Lord find in you, dear friend, a faithful follower, so that He may be able to say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

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