

The Confession of Followers

John 1:35-51

³⁵ Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.
³⁶ And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Introduction

Luke 9:23. “And He was saying to *them* all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.’”

The subject is following Jesus, verse 23, “If anyone wishes to come after Me.” This is a text about how to come after Jesus, how to follow Jesus, how to become a Christian, how to be saved, how to be redeemed and born again. That’s what it’s about. It is critical teaching.

And one thing strikes you at the very outset, and that is coming after Jesus involves self-denial. That’s clearly the first thing that’s said. “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself.”

The gospel is a call for self denial. It is not a call for self fulfillment.

And that puts the true gospel in opposition to the contemporary evangelical gospel which is a gospel of self fulfillment, self help. Jesus is viewed as a utilitarian genie. You rub the lamp, He jumps out and says, "You have whatever you want." And you give Him your list, and He delivers.

There are those within the framework of evangelicalism in the Charismatic segment who tell you Jesus wants you well, and if you're not well it's because you haven't claimed your healing. Jesus wants you prosperous and rich, and if you're not it's because you haven't claimed it. Jesus wants you free from debt and if you send the televangelists enough money, you'll by virtue of your faith free yourself from debt, or the demon of debt, as it's often referred to, because Jesus doesn't want you having any troubles or any problems. Your salvation is a guarantee of health, wealth, and prosperity, and happiness.

The psychological, man-centered evangelicals tell you that Jesus gives you peace, and Jesus gives you joy, and Jesus makes you a better salesman, and Jesus helps you hit more home runs. Jesus really wants to make you feel better about yourself, and wants to elevate your self image, and wants to put an end to your negative thinking.

Self-Esteem: The New Reformation, Robert Schuller writes, "It is precisely at this point that classical theology has erred in its insistence that theology be God-centered and not man-centered." So this is an iconoclastic beginning. The first thing we have to do is put an end to classical theology. We have to put an end to God-centered theology and replace it with man-centered theology. That's pretty blatant,

He writes further, "This master plan of God is designed around the deepest needs of human beings." And what are those needs? "Self dignity, self respect, self worth, self-esteem. The pearl of great price is genuine self respect and self-esteem."

He further writes, “If we follow God’s plan as faithfully as we can, we will feel good about ourselves.” That’s the gospel of evangelicalism. It’s the feel-good gospel. Feel good about yourself. Then he goes on to say, “God needs you and me to help create a society of self-esteeming people.” Pardon me if I don’t join. I can’t think of a group I’d less like to associate with.

There was a saint of many centuries ago who got it right. This is a prayer that he wrote. “Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess everything, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive. Let me find Thy light in my darkness, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley, Thy life in my death.”

Then Jesus saw Andrew and John following Him, He asked them the first test question of a true disciple, “What do you really want from Me?”

- Are you ambitious opportunists, looking for position and power?
- Are you nationalists, looking for a military commander to conquer?
- Are you looking for a formula for success?

- Are you seeking happiness and comfort; food or healing?
Ask yourself the same question, “Just why are you following Jesus?”

- Is it because He works better than antacid?
- Is it because you do not want to go to hell?
- Is it because you think He will double your money or erase your problems?
- Is it because He is good for business?

To all who would be disciples, following Christ is not enough – you must follow Him for the right reasons. To follow Christ for our own purposes is really asking Christ to follow you; to fulfill your mission; to do your will!

H. A. Ironside wrote,

Many people come to Jesus, I think, because they hope to be benefited by Him. Some come hoping for physical relief. I would rather have a man come to me and say honestly, “I am not concerned about my soul, but I am greatly concerned about my body.” I am glad to do what I can for a man who comes to me like that, but it really hurts to have people come professing an interest in spiritual things, when they are only concerned about temporal relief.

1. Day 1 He is Here

¹⁹ Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

²¹ And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

And he answered, “No.”

²² Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

²³ He said: “I am

‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

“Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’

as the prophet Isaiah said.”

²⁴ Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.

²⁵ And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

²⁶ John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. ²⁷ It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

2. Day 2 Look at Him

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

³⁰ This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ³¹ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

³² And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³ I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

3. Day 3 Follow Him

The Followers Come to Christ

³⁵ Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.
³⁶ And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?”

They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”

³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).

⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

The Followers Come to Christ

First the Larger picture. John the writer of the this Gospel includes this section with the calling of disciples, because of what the disciples say in response to Christ. They testify to the reality of Jesus being the Son of God the Messiah.

— —³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

— —³⁸ Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?”

— — They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”

³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

— —and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?”

— —They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”

They intended to Stay with him, they wanted Him

— —**Jesus Turned,
Come and see.**

Jesus made commitment to them,
He knew what was in them. The Holy Spirit had already prepared these disciples for following Jesus

John 2:23

²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

John 6:37

³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

— — —³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

tenth hour

noted in Roman time for the amazing moment of Johns life in meeting Jesus

— —⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Andrew

— — —⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah”

⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

—-One of the two
was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

He’s always doing the same thing, bringing people to Jesus

John 1 brings peter

John 6 bring a boy with food for feeding of 5000

John 12 brings gentiles to Jesus

nationwide study found that, on any given Sunday morning, **one out of every four people** surveyed would willingly attend a church service if they were invited by a friend. Do you know what

that represents? That means **that twenty million more people** in America would be in church this Sunday, if they were extended an invitation.

Every study of evangelistic outreach in the states reveals the same answers – **eighty-five percent** or more of all the people who come to faith in Christ are brought to Christ by someone they already trusted.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

Képhas: "a rock," Cephas, a name given to the apostle Peter

Original Word: Κηφᾶς, ᾶ, ὁ

Short Definition: Cephas

Definition: Cephas (Aramaic for rock), the new name given to Simon Peter, the apostle.

A Stone -- Peter

Petros: "a stone" or "a boulder," Peter, one of the twelve apostles

Original Word: Πέτρος, ου, ὁ

Phonetic Spelling: (pet'-ros)

Short Definition: Peter

Definition: Peter, a Greek name meaning rock.

Matt 16 Peter confession

Following Christ

Matthew 16:24 - Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 4:19-25 - And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

John 10:27 - My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

1 Corinthians 11:1 - Be ye followers of me, even as I also [am] of Christ.

John 8:12 - Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

What does it mean to follow Christ

1 Peter 2:21 - For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Matthew 7:21-23 - Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven

1 John 2:3-4 - And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

1 Peter 1:14-16 - As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

The first requirement of discipleship is self-denial. A person who is not willing to **deny himself** cannot claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. **Deny** is from *aparneomai*, which means to completely disown, to utterly separate oneself from someone.

Arthur Pink wrote, "Growth in grace is growth downward; it is the forming of a lower estimate of ourselves; it is a deepening realization of our nothingness; it is a heartfelt recognition that we are not worthy of the least of God's mercies."

The second requirement of discipleship is to **take up** one's **cross**. This idea has profound meaning which must be understood. To **take up** one's **cross** is simply to be willing to pay any price for Christ's sake. It is the willingness to endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom for His sake.

The third requirement of discipleship is loyal obedience. Only after a person denies himself and takes up his cross, Jesus said, is he prepared to **follow Me**. True discipleship is submission to the lordship of Christ that becomes a pattern of life. "The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked"

“If anyone serves Me,” Jesus said, “let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26).

4. The Fourth Day The Followers are Found By Christ

⁴³ The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹ And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to

you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

— — —⁴³ **The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”**

God is the initiator of Salvation

Luke 19:10 “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”

John 4:23 “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”

John 6:37 “Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never send away”

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day”

John 6:65 So Jesus added, “Because of this I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has allowed him to come”

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you”).

Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began to rejoice and praise the word of the Lord, and all who had been appointed for eternal life believed

Acts 16:14 *A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying*

— —⁴⁵ **Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”**

Acts 17:26-27 “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.”

Proverbs 8:17 “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.”

Deuteronomy 4:29 “But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

Hebrews 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Although it is clear from scripture that God desires those who seek him and

and even makes it clear of the necessity of seeking God to find him

It is just as clear that know can can do it. We are unable and unwilling to do so.

No One Seeks After God

Many who have been saved have said that “they found God” but was God really missing? Truly “no one understands; no one seeks for God” (Rom 3:11) because “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom 3:10) since “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one”

This is a biblical tension between The Sovereignty of God and Human Responsibility

It is clearly portrayed in these two verses

Acts 2:23

²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Acts 4:27

²⁷ “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

from Andrew Fuller.

A fleshly mind may ask, “How can these things be?” How can Divine predestination accord with human agency and

accountableness? But a truly humble Christian, finding both in his Bible, will believe both, though he may be unable fully to understand their consistency; and he will find in the one a motive to depend entirely on God, and in the other a caution against slothfulness and presumptuous neglect of duty. And thus a Christian minister, if he view the doctrine in its proper connexions, will find nothing in it to hinder the free use of warnings, invitations, and persuasions, either to the converted or the unconverted. Yet he will not ground his hopes of success on the pliability of the human mind, but on the promised grace of God, who (while he prophesies to the dry bones, as he is commanded) is known to inspire them with the breath of life.

Charles Spurgeon talks about this same thing in his inimitable way:

“That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory, but they are not. The fault is in our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and I find that in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.”

— —-⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

That seems like a biased thing to say, right? But it really was not. Nazareth was in fact, a wicked city that had little room for God. How in the world could the Messiah come out of Nazareth?

Nazareth was the first city to respond to Jesus’ claims with violence. Nazareth was ready to put Him to death after just one day of teaching. I believe a lot of it was due to the fact that Nazareth was only four miles away from Sepphoris, the Roman capital of Galilee. When the Roman rulers needed workmen, they drew from the laboring class of Nazareth, and thus the men of Nazareth were exposed daily to the pagan influence of Rome.

— —-⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

This is a true Jew, no deceit .

The word “guile” is used elsewhere for “bait” or “trap”. In other words, Nathanael was not an opportunist with deceitful intentions.

— —-⁴⁸ **Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?”**
Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

To the Jews, under a fig tree was a place of peace. When a man could be undisturbed under his own fig tree, he was considered to be truly at rest. Furthermore, the fig tree was leafy and shady, and it was their custom to sit and meditate under the cover of its branches. In fact, sitting under a fig tree was, in that day, a euphemism for “spiritual mediation”. It would seem that Nathanael had been meditating under his fig tree, just before Philip arrived.

“Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

Matthew 12:25

And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

box

Luke 6:8

But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward.

Revelation 2:23

'And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

— —⁵⁰ **Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”** ⁵¹ **And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”**

Gen 28:12

¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Many Bible commentators believe that Jesus was implying that Nathanael had been meditating on the story of Jacob and the ladder from heaven, where angels were ascending and descending on it (Genesis 28). Verse 47 alludes to Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel and who was a very deceitful, opportunistic man.

you shall see heaven open,

heaven open to a jew was unheard of, the Sacrificial system and the Day of Atonement the the priest went in one time a year

The heaven opened (*ton ouranon anewgota*). Second perfect active participle of *anoigw* with double reduplication, standing open

Jesus would be the ladder to give access to heaven

1. [Christ](#) may be understood by this saying to mean, that a clear and abundant revelation of [God](#)'s will should be now made unto men; that heaven itself should be laid as it were open, and all the mysteries which had been shut up and hidden in it from eternity, relative to the [salvation](#) and glorification of man; should be now fully revealed.

.That by the angels of God ascending and descending, is to be understood, that a perpetual intercourse should now be opened between heaven and earth, through the medium of Christ, who was God manifested in the flesh. Our blessed Lord is represented in his mediatorial capacity as the ambassador of God to men; and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man, is a metaphor taken from the custom of despatching couriers or messengers from the prince to his ambassador in a foreign court, and from the ambassador back to the prince.