

THE TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP

TEXT: LUKE 9:57-62

INTRODUCTION:

1. Back in Luke 9:23-26, our Lord gave His disciples a test of discipleship.
2. This is the test of discipleship, not the terms of salvation (cf. John 3:16; Romans 10:9).
3. The test of discipleship can be broken down into four parts: self is to be denied (9:23); the cross is to be taken up daily (9:23); the Lord Jesus Christ is to be followed (9:23); and our life is to be lost (9:24).
4. The cross is to be taken up daily (9:23) means death to self. Galatians 5:24, 25 says, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."
5. Christ is to be followed (9:23, 57, 59, 61). This is impossible without first denying self, and the cross being taken up daily (9:23).
6. And our life is to be lost (9:24). Frederic Godet said this statement (repeated several times in the Gospels -- cf. 17:32, 33) was the substance of our Lord's moral authority.
7. Tonight, we see this test of discipleship illustrated in the three men referred to in Luke 9:57-62.
8. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "In these six verses we have thumbnail sketches of three very different men who came into contact with Christ" (*Outline Studies in Luke*).

I. THE IMPULSIVE (9:57, 58)

1. This conversation is also recorded in Matthew 8:19 and 20. From Matthew's account we learn that this "certain man" was a scribe.
2. Perhaps this man had heard Jesus say, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (9:23), and so he stepped forward and said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest" (9:57).
3. Our Lord answered him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (9:58).
4. These are tests of discipleship, not terms of salvation. To a lost sinner Paul and Silas said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).
5. Disciples must be taught that the Christian life may bring hardship, separation from loved ones, and loneliness (cf. 9:58).

6. Albert Barnes said, "The Son of man has no home and no pillow. He is a stranger in his own world -- a wanderer and an outcast from the homes of people."
7. John 1:11 says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."
8. "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). His disciples should not expect anything more. If you have a nice comfortable bed and a nice soft pillow, count your blessings!
9. This scribe was impulsive, but God can use impulsive people. Peter was very impulsive but went on to become a great preacher (cf. 9:33).

II. THE PROCRASTINATING (9:59, 60)

1. This man was just the opposite from the first man. We have here a contrast between an impulsive man and a procrastinating man (9:59).
2. The impulsive man says, "He who hesitates is lost," and the procrastinating man says, "Look before you leap."
3. Our Lord said, "Follow me" (9:59). These words signify trust and obedience.
4. *Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.* -- John H. Sammis
5. Many years ago, there was a testimony meeting, following an evangelistic crusade by Dwight L. Moody in Brockton, Massachusetts.
6. A young man stood to speak, and it soon became clear he knew little Christian doctrine. But he finished by saying, "I'm not quite sure -- but I'm going to trust, and I'm going to obey."
7. The hymnwriter Daniel Towner was in that meeting. He jotted down the words and gave them to John Sammis, who developed the lyrics from them.
8. *When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.*
9. When our Lord says, "Follow me," He is saying, "Believe my Word, and do what I say!"
10. Mark these two words in verse 59 -- "me first." It must always be "God first."
11. God before family.
12. God before friends.
13. God before our job.
14. God before our plans and ambitions, etc.

15. Some argue that God should not have to come before family, but our Lord said to be one of His disciples, He had to come even before a person's family (cf. Luke 14:25-27).
16. Albert Barnes said, "The meaning of this is clear. Christ must be loved supremely, or he is not loved at all. If we are not willing to give up all earthly possessions, and forsake all earthly friends, and if we do not obey him rather than all others, we have no true attachment to him."
17. Some Bible teachers, like G. Campbell Morgan, think the man was not serious about following Jesus because the man's father was still alive!
18. Morgan said, "His father in all probability was still living. It was not a case of asking to attend a funeral. I never understood that, until in conversation with Dr. George Adam Smith, he told me of what happened to himself when endeavouring to persuade a young Arab to accompany him into the interior. At last the Arab looked at him, and said, 'Suffer me first to go and bury my father,' in the very words of Scripture; and the old man was sitting by his side when he uttered them."

III. THE HESITATING (9:61, 62)

1. He also said "me first" (9:61; cf. vs. 59).
2. This man said, " Lord, I will follow thee; but..." (9:61).
3. Many people say they will start serving God, but...
4. This man's request seemed reasonable, but even the common civilities of life are wrong if they are put before prompt and complete obedience to Christ (9:62).
5. You may recall that when the Shunammite woman's son died, the prophet Elisha said to his servant Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again" (II Kings 4:29).
6. In fact, our Lord's words in Luke 9:62 remind us of the call of Elisha (cf. I Kings 19:19-21).
7. There are many things in this life that are good in themselves but sometimes they must be given up for the Lord.
8. When Elisha broke up his plough and built an altar, and slew his oxen, and boiled their flesh, he was signifying that he was going to follow the Lord all the way.
9. "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).
10. Plowing needs careful, undivided attention. You can't plow a furrow looking backwards.
11. Plowing needs concentration.

12. "Looking back" (9:62) signifies instability; it signifies double-mindedness; it signifies indecisiveness.
13. Godet said, "The Lord is setting out, not again to return; will he who remains behind at this decisive moment ever rejoin Him? There are critical periods in the moral life, when that which is not done at the moment will never be done" (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*).

CONCLUSION:

1. When Jesus says, "Follow me," He means, "Trust Me, trust yourself to Me, put confidence in Me, and obey Me."
2. G. Campbell Morgan illustrated this by telling the story of a friend of his. She and her companions were traveling in the Far East, and they arranged to have a guide lead them.
3. There came an hour when the guide came to take possession of the party, and lead them through all their journeys.
4. Three simple things happened which revealed to G. Campbell Morgan's friend the meaning of a guide.
5. In the first place, the guide came to them and said: "Will you be good enough to give everything to me? I will take charge of everything." They handed over to him all their main articles of their luggage, but they held onto a few small handbags which ladies carry.
6. The guide said: "You must give everything to me." They made their protest, saying there were in those bags things that would be necessary on the journey.
7. The guide said: "They will be far safer with me, and you will be far safer without them."
8. After a little while, they were waiting at a railway station for a train; the guide was attending to the baggage. A train came in, and they got on board, and the whole party entered.
9. As soon as they were seated, the guide returned, and said: "Will you be good enough to come out?" They came out, and then asked why he had required them to do so.
10. He replied: "That is the wrong train. Will you be kind enough not to go before me, but after me?" She had learned her second lesson as to the necessity for a guide.
11. In the course of the next day or two, on a long train journey, they were wondering what provision would be made for them on their arrival at their destination. Some stranger, coming from the place at which they were to stay, had told them there was no accommodation, and the guide was strangely silent.

12. When they arrived everything was ready, and the guide said quietly:
"Perhaps you will trust me to prepare for you ahead."
13. Three things: Give everything to me. Follow me; but do not go before me.
Trust me about the hidden things of the future.
14. G. Campbell Morgan said, "The whole suggestiveness of that simple story illuminates the thought in the word of Christ, 'Follow Me.'"