

Call to Obedience # 419  
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
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## No Salvation Without Following

by Reimar Schultze

Jesus came into the world to make disciples. A disciple is a follower of Jesus. His entire attention, his total devotion, his interests and pleasures are all bound up in following his Master. He has no greater joy than to walk with Him. He will say with David: *One thing I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD... to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple* (Ps. 27:4). For disciples, Jesus is their temple and that is where they dwell, where they worship and where they inquire.

A disciple delights in God's commandments and he meditates upon them day and night. He bears witness of his Savior and cares little for the comforts of this world. In the words of John: He abides in Christ and Christ abides in him; in the words of Paul: *For to me to live is Christ...* (Phil. 1:21).

Jesus came into the world to make disciples. In our theological thinking of today, we have to be careful to realize that Jesus' coming into the world to save sinners includes discipleship. Discipleship is leaving the sin business behind us. John said: *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him* (1 John 3:6). As we follow, we abide. It is that simple.

If we do not abide in Him, we shall be cut off from our Beloved and be cast forth into the fire, to be burned (John 15:6). So as we draw together all the teachings of our Lord concerning salvation, we are forced to come to this inevitable conclusion, astounding as it may be: **A man is not saved, nor safe, until he becomes and remains a follower of Jesus.**

Jesus taught that a sheep not following a shepherd is lost. Therefore following Jesus is 1000 times more necessary than anything else you can do. Again, following and abiding go together. You cannot abide without following, neither can you follow without abiding. The Apostle Paul carries this doctrine of abiding through following over into his Roman letter by saying: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...* (Rom. 8:1). The whole focal point of the Pauline Christian theology is not the rebirth but "abiding in Christ," a phrase Paul uses 74 times in his epistles. By following

Jesus, our Lord will live in our bodies as He lived in His body 2000 years ago. He will not live in us by virtue of a spiritual experience we had years ago, but by virtue of our following in His steps in the here and now.

Following Jesus demands that we give up the old life, the old lifestyle, habits and loves. All of this has to be nailed to the cross because the self-life rebels against following Jesus. Everyone born of God who is not willing to give up the old life will come into spiritual darkness. There is no light outside of following Jesus and this means: we are either all for God or not for God at all. *No servant can serve two masters...* (Luke 16:13), we either serve God or mammon.

From Adam on, less than total commitment has never been acceptable. Many have thought throughout the centuries that God would accept less than that. King Saul was one of them. He thought that partial obedience would keep him in the favor of God. He was mistaken. God rejected him. The children of Israel under Samuel thought they could serve God and Ashteroth. They were also mistaken. Our God is a jealous God. He commanded us to love Him with *all our heart, soul, mind and strength*. He leaves no room for competing loves and loyalties.

There is no salvation without discipleship, no life without following Jesus. One little visit with Jesus at an altar of repentance does not in itself buy us a ticket to eternal bliss and glory. God wants more than one moment of your life, He wants all of your life. Salvation is not cheap. Jesus gave His life to purchase divine life for you; you have to die and to keep dying to get it. He said: *...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me* (Luke 9:23). The secret of living is in dying.

Yes, His name shall be called *...JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins* (Matt. 1:22). And how is this to be done? It is done by our following Jesus, and then His saving life can keep working in us and through us as Paul said: *...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life* (Rom. 5:10). By following Christ, we have His continual saving life within us. Hence, following is everyone's calling.

**Again, salvation is not a moment, a point in history. It is a life given to God.** It is a life received in perpetuity, ever allowing fresh streams of divine life flowing into us and out through us from the throne of God. That is what grace is all about. First, it is in you receiving His great salvation and secondly,

it is His enabling grace in keeping you, *...to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy* (Jude 1:24).

Make no mistake about it, had Peter, James and John not followed Jesus once He told them: "Follow me," they would not have been saved. Had Matthew, the tax collector, not followed Jesus immediately when He said to him: "Follow me," he would not have been saved. Their transformation began the moment they took their first step following Jesus. It began internally and became ever more manifest externally. When Judas stopped following Jesus, he was lost. Do you really believe that you can go to heaven without following Jesus? Do you really believe that your rebirth experience is all that you need?

Jesus said: *make disciples [followers] out of all nations*. He did not say: *make converts of all nations*. That is too narrow. He wants followers who obey Him entirely without variation or vacation. Jesus can do nothing with you until you become a disciple, a follower of Jesus. Jesus bound Himself to the law of discipleship, meaning that He will only work through His disciples to finish the work He began on earth. They are His only hands, feet and mouthpieces to finish the work.

And here it will serve us well to make a distinction between believers and disciples: **all disciples are believers, but not all believers are disciples**. For example it says concerning the Jews: *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue* (John 12:42).

Do you get the picture my friend? Here were many who believed but were unwilling to follow. The cost of discipleship was too high for them. Are you only a believer or also a disciple? Your eternal destiny depends upon this. It says of these believers that they did not confess Him. Note that Jesus said of such: *...whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven* (Matt. 10:33). This tells us plainly that believers who are not disciples will have no place amongst the white robed saints. They would not follow Him because they would lose their church membership, their reputation and possibly even their lives. Remember, most all of the apostles did!

Our churches universally are filled with multitudes of people who are believers, but they refuse to become disciples for fear of what it would cost them: the loss of friends, the loss of advancement on the job or the loss of a job altogether, the loss of their reputation or their homes. If we are like this, we are as chaff that the wind soon drives away, as clouds without water.

Unfortunately many pastors pack their church buildings with such like this. Let us not become obsessed with numbers but with Jesus. Let Him add to the church such as are willing to follow Him.

Further, let us not hide behind our beautiful church creeds: the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed: I believe in God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son, etc. These creeds are wonderful in themselves. They are helpful aids in the confessions of our faith. But they say nothing about discipleship and they easily become an opium of the masses who have not read their Bibles giving them the perception that by saying them they deserve a place in heaven. Jesus addresses people like this: *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* (Matt. 7:21). *Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity* (Luke 13:26-27).

Salvation is following Jesus. How then do we specifically follow Jesus? First there is the rebirth, then there is the life of self-denial and obedience. It is maintained by these steps:

1. Read the Word of God every day and meditate on its truth.
2. Pray; bring your praises, supplications and requests to Christ daily; then let Him speak to you, revealing truths and giving direction.
3. Witness or testify at each opportunity the Holy Spirit leads. By this you receive the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord is a gift of God to every obedient heart.
4. Obey God in everything. Faithfully attend worship services and prayer meetings.

The King of all kings, the Lord of all lords is calling you to follow Him. What an honor and high privilege!

In conclusion, **the first generation of Christians understood that Christianity is following Jesus to the death, do we?**

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