

And Follow Me

Jesus said in **Luke 9:23** *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* I would like to take some time to consider what it is that Jesus was saying.

"If any man will come after me..." This saying is recorded immediately after **Luke 9:22** in which Jesus tells them that the Son of man must suffer many things, must be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, must be slain, and must be raised the third day. And it is after that He says *"If any man will come after me..."* Most of the times that I have read Luke 9:23 I have primarily assumed He was just talking about being resurrected with Him. But in the context it seems Jesus was implying more than this. To come after Him would have included suffering many things, being rejected, being killed, and being raised. Certainly this alone should show how great the reward is if we understand what those before us would go through and what perhaps some of us might go through as well to be raised with Him.

"Let him deny himself..." To deny ones self would be to deny our desires replacing them with another's. This is certainly contrary to what we would naturally do. But it is not uncommon within the scriptures.

Jesus did the will of the Father. In **John 5:30** Jesus says that He seeks not His own will, but the will of the Father. **Galatians 1:4** says that Jesus gave himself up for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father. None of what Jesus did could have been easy, but He subjected Himself to the will of the Father. He denied Himself and took up the will of another.

Jesus taught that we also should do the will of the Father. In **Matthew 7:21** Jesus taught that while many will want to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, only those that do the will of the Father will be granted entry. In **Matthew 12:50** Jesus said that those that do the will of the Father are those that are His mother and sister and brother with the context implying that those are the ones that are seeking Him and those are the ones that He considers to be His family.

Paul spoke of constant struggle in **Romans 7:14-25**, knowing what was right to do but having difficulty in actually doing it in. While Paul didn't use the words here he was clearly speaking of having to deny himself. It is not a one time decision, but one that must continually be made. While we may not perfectly accomplish doing the will of the Father as Jesus did we certainly can strive for such and repent when we fall short.

"And take up his cross daily..." Jesus spoke these words before He had been crucified. So certainly, when He said this, it may not have carried all of the same connotations that it would today. Though His audience was more familiar with the cross than we are. According to Thayer, the cross was a well known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment that was typically reserved for the guiltiest criminals. One that was being crucified typically had to take up his cross and carry it to the sight of his death. Certainly we can take from these words that we must be willing to carry our burdens, but Jesus was giving reference to the most extreme of burdens, those that we carry to our demise for His sake. He is definitely not giving a picture of ease.

"And follow me." There is so much here that would not sound all that pleasing. Jesus was implying that to follow Him would involve suffering, being rejected, being killed, and being treated as the worst offenders in society. He taught them that to do this, they would not do what was pleasing in their own minds, but that they would replace that with what was pleasing to the Father. None of this sounds like an easy way to live our lives. That is, until you recognize what comes as a result. Because what is also implied within these words is that, regardless of these things that may happen to us, if we

deny ourselves and follow Him we will be raised with Him as well. Consider the words of Paul:

Romans 8:18 *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Let us all seek to follow Jesus Christ both in difficult times as well as in times of relative ease.