

Follow Jesus



Caleb: Lessons from a Dog's Life (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

Now let's consider first of all, what is the essence of Christianity? If you were asked to sum up the Christian life in two words, what would you say? Follow Me. I don't think you can say the Christian life more accurately than that. It is following Jesus. You see, it is not a doctrine primarily. It's a person. Doctrine is important. I spent years teaching doctrine, so it's not unimportant. But it is not primary. I was speaking about a brother the other day who is far from here. I said, his problem is he puts doctrine before relationship. But relationship is primary. Doctrine is second.

Knowing the gospel is not enough. You have to be related to the God who gave the gospel. First the relationship; then the doctrine. Please understand, doctrine is extremely important, but it is not ultimate. Paul said near the end of his life, "But I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." He did not say, "I know what I have believed," he said, "I know whom I have believed..." And he put it in the perfect tense—I have believed. It's settled: I have believed.

Many of our dear Jewish friends will tell you that the correct meaning of the word for faith in Hebrew emonoch, is not believing, but loyalty. And they are right. Primarily, emonoch, faith, is loyalty. You see, the evangelicals, the Protestants, the Charismatics tend to put doctrine in the wrong place, if we had any at all. We argue about doctrine. I mean, the early fathers spent I don't know how many centuries arguing about whether you should have the letter iota in the word or not. _____? The destiny of the faith of the church depended on that one little iota—of like substance of the same substance. Was Jesus of the like substance with the Father or similar substance with the Father?

I was with a brother just recently, preaching, I don't think I'll embarrass him by mentioning his name, but we were in a conference to discuss our Jewish heritage for the church. We had a panel. He was one and I was one. And somehow they were trying to tie him down to what he believed. He believed perfectly right, but he said, "The Christians have put the wrong emphasis. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, didn't deal with what you believed. He dealt with how you lived." And that is primary, and we have to return to that. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount is not about doctrine. It's about conduct. That's where, as they say, the rubber meets the

road.

Let's look at the examples in the New Testament. It said three times in Matthew 9:9:

> "As Jesus passed on from there He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him."

I suppose that's the shortest evangelistic message that's ever been preached. "Follow Me." That's all He had to say. Of course it depends on Him being who He was. But that's the essence of the Christian life in two words—Follow Jesus. Well then you know the theme in John 21 after the resurrection when Jesus settled accounts with Peter. Incidentally, we are talking about the importance of what we are saying, here is a dramatic example. Peter denies the Lord three times. Now there was a way back, but the only way back was to affirm his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. He had to unsay every time he said it wrong. And Jesus took him through that. Peter was concerned. "Why do you ask me three times?" Because he denied Him three times. You see if you have said the wrong thing you know what you have to do. You have to repent and "un-say" it. You have to say the right thing in place of the wrong thing.

So here we are the scene of the shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had directed them to where they caught the fish. And then He spoke to Peter and He said—John 21:18:

> "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not with. This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'"

To where? To the cross. And then Peter got interested in John and said, "What's going to happen to this man?"

> "Jesus said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.'"

Now three times in the New Testament you have those words, "Follow Me."

Now what is it about Caleb the Dog that gave the pattern for you and me? Well, there are dogs—and dogs. And especially since people have come from other countries and brought their dogs with them these remarks are not totally true. But, let's talk about a trained dog, that is a one-owner dog. That's the kind of dog we are talking about. Incidentally, have you ever watched people going through owner training for dogs? They don't train the dogs, they train the owner! It's easy to train the dogs. It's awfully difficult to train the owner.

Anyhow, what are the aims of such a dog? A real faithful committed dog in relationship to it's master? The first thing is to be near. Is that right—you that own dogs? You're sitting on one side of the room, the dog is sprawled out at your feet. You get up to move to another chair. Wearily the dog heaves itself to its legs, slumps down and says, "Why did you have to move? But if you move, I have to move?" So that's the first thing. And I think, probably that's the most important thing in the Christian life is to be near Jesus. You cannot go wrong, really, if your aim is to be near Jesus.

You have a dog with a leash or a lead and you get up and jiggle the lead and the dog springs to its feet, jumps up and down and says in effect, "Wherever you go, I will go." It doesn't say, "How long are you going for? Half an hour? Six hours? Two weeks? It's not important where you go. I'll go." He wholly follows you. No questions asked.

So Caleb in the desert said, "My fellow Israelites have blown it. They've lost it. We're going to have to go on. How long? Forty days? Forty weeks, forty months, forty years? It's all the same to me. I follow. Wherever you go, Lord, I'll go." That's my aim in life.

Then another thing about dogs is they are like the true Christian it says in 2 Corinthians 5:7,

> "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

And, dogs basically do not rely on their eyes. This is a little extract from a rather interesting book I read recently called Blind Courage. I don't know whether you have read it, but it is the story of a man who is blind. He was a Christian. He was so grateful to the Lord for what the Lord had done for him in saving him. He said, "Lord, I would like to do something for you. What would you like me to do?" And he told the Lord said walk the Appalachian Trail. That's 2,100 miles of very rigorous terrain from Georgia to Maine. He said, "That couldn't be right." Every time he said, "Lord, what do you want me to do for You?" the answer was, "Walk the Appalachian Trail." So with his seeing-eye dog named Orient, they set out. And that blind man walked 2,100 miles of very rough territory with no real companion except his dog. And this is what he says about the dog.

> "When it comes to priority of senses, Orient got his information from his nose first, his ears second, and his

> eyes last, walking by scent and not by sight."

Mino Persol, who trains dogs for search and rescue, described the difference in human and canine scent this way:

> "One of the substances released by human perspiration is butyric acid. If one gram, a small drop in the bottom of a teaspoon were to be spread throughout a ten-story building, a person could smell it at the window only at the moment of release. If the same amount were spread over the entire city of Philadelphia, a dog could smell it anywhere, even at an altitude of 300 feet."

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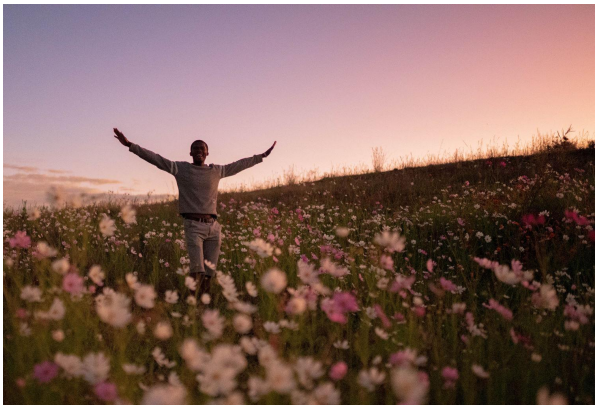

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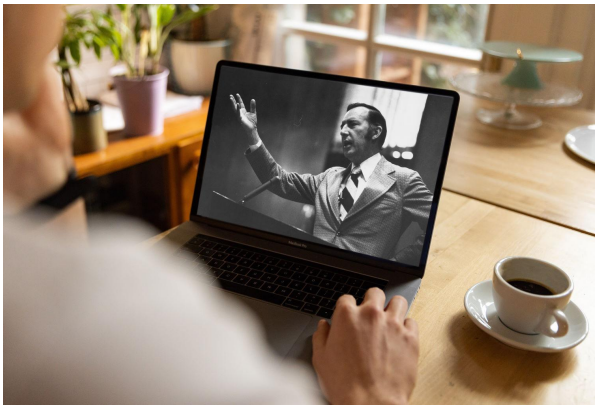

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