

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life:  
(4) Following Jesus unto Salvation (part 2)**

**Introduction:**

Our study of the ABC’s of the Christian Life (or perhaps better, the ABC’s of Christian Living), led us to address first, what it is initially to come to Jesus Christ for salvation. We gave consideration to this important matter on the first two Sundays of our study. We then directed our study to what we are to do after having come to Christ. Simply stated, we are to follow Jesus. *Coming to Jesus* begins a life of *following Jesus*, even as He leads us out of our sin, out of this fallen world, and forward in, and towards, the kingdom that the Father has promised to all who follow His Son. We may see this set forth in our Lord’s promise to His apostles in Luke 22:24ff. He said to them,

<sup>28</sup>“But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. <sup>29</sup>And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, <sup>30</sup>that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:28-30)

Now we are not His *apostles*, but we are His *disciples*, and the kingdom the Lord promised to His apostles is also promised to us. Upon our exoneration on the Day of Judgment of the guilt of our sin through Jesus Christ, our Lord will say unto us, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:37). And so, one day that kingdom will be fully realized, but even now as we follow Him, “we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:28). Coming to King Jesus in faith begins the life of following King Jesus in faith and obedience unto eternal life in His everlasting kingdom.

Toward the end of our notes last week we began to give our attention to a very important passage--Mark 8:34-37, that speaks to what it is to follow Jesus. We addressed it superficially due to time constraints, and we will not rehearse fully today what we set forth in last week’s notes. But it would serve us well to give more attention to the substance of that passage because of the great importance of its instruction to us on the nature of the Christian life. But rather than traveling over ground we already covered in Mark 8, let us look at its parallel passage in **Luke 9:23-27**. And then after we address the meaning of these verses, we will then attempt to understand the passage within the larger context of Luke’s Gospel as an all-important, all pervasive theme.

**I. Following Jesus (Luke 9:23-27)<sup>1</sup>**

We read these words of the Lord Jesus that He spoke to those who were with Him:

<sup>23</sup>Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. <sup>25</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? <sup>26</sup>For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels. <sup>27</sup>But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.”

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<sup>1</sup> This same account is also found in Matthew 16:24-28.

Here is the record of a very important occasion in the ministry of our Lord Jesus in which He informs His disciples of the nature and cost of discipleship to Himself. He is about to embark upon His final journey from Galilee to Jerusalem where He died. His departure from Galilee on this final journey begins in Luke 9:51f, which reads, “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face.”

The words of our Lord in 9:23 are words of instruction to His disciples that *they must follow the same path in the same manner as He, if they desire to share in His glory*. Please take note of what He is saying is at stake. The certain prospect of *eternal life* itself is set forth as outcome of a life of faith in Christ, a faith characterized by denying self, daily taking up one’s cross, and following Jesus. But on the other hand, a failure or refusal to live in this manner will result in a person being “lost” and “ashamed” at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And so, here our Lord describes the way of life of all true disciples: they are *to follow Him*. Eternal life is assured to His disciples, those who deny themselves and follow Him. But eternal life is promised only to them who follow Him in the manner He prescribed for them. They are ones who deny themselves and take up their cross daily in following Him.

What a grand incentive for people to believe on Him, to respond in their commitment to follow Him! Glory, honor, eternal life is the outcome of that life! On the other hand, the consequences of failing or refusing to follow Him are equally ominous as the promise of life is glorious. For the one who refuses to follow Him will “forfeit his life.” *Clearly, the Lord Jesus is saying that there is no salvation apart from following Him*. Doing His will must take precedence over doing our own will, if we are to inherit everlasting life.

Let us quickly rehearse what our Lord was instructing these would-be disciples to do.

### **1. The one who follows Jesus must *deny himself* (Luke 9:23)**

What does it mean to deny oneself? It involves several ideas. *First, to deny yourself means that you put your own interests as secondary to doing the will of God*.

One characteristic that is natural to a fallen man is the sinful desire and propensity to live as though he is the center of all things. This is the fallen man’s world view:

“I am at the center of my universe, and I see, assess, and value all things in the manner and degree that they have bearing on me.” What is most important is what I deem to be important, and I choose to govern my life accordingly.”

One common way this sinful nature will manifest itself is that we will believe and do whatever appears to be least difficult for us and most pleasurable for us. Our own well-being is the center of our existence. We are inherently selfish creatures that order our lives in a way that will bring us most comfort and happiness. Oh yes, we will do for others as well, but our fallen nature will tend to do so because of some benefit that ultimately will be brought to self.

But the one who becomes a true Christian, who has become a disciple of Jesus Christ, has had his world view radically transformed. He has come to see and desire that the will of God in Jesus Christ will be done first and foremost in his life. Jesus Christ has become the center of his universe, of his world view. Yes, he continues to have the old desires and impulses intrude upon his thinking and entice his heart in that old direction, but due to the grace in salvation that God has wrought in his soul, he desires and delights foremost in doing the will of God.

Yes, the one who is following Jesus is also concerned about his own interests. This is not wrong in and of itself. But the difference is that for the disciple his immediate interests are not *primary*. If he has a choice between serving himself and obeying God, He will, by the grace of God and if he is thinking rightly, deny himself, and obey God even if to do so brings difficulty to himself.

Our Lord Jesus lived in this manner. He did not order His life according to what would bring Him the most comfort, but rather He denied Himself so as to do the will of His Father. He refused to be self-serving. He had a responsibility to honor and obey His Father and He would do so even at great cost to Himself.

When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, it was an enticement for Jesus to be self-serving. The devil encouraged Jesus to escape His suffering by serving Himself--turning stones into bread. He enticed Jesus to obtain glory for Himself in a manner that would involve no pain, no suffering or rejection. But our Lord in effect said, ***“No, I will not take the easy way and compromise obedience or fidelity to the Father for the sake of comfort, popularity, or self-exaltation, I would choose rather to suffer and die than to be unfaithful.”***

It should be so with us. Often times alternatives are set before us. One is the way of the Lord, which is the path of righteousness, but it entails difficulty and suffering. The other is a path to “glory” as the world counts it--wealth and honor and worldly happiness, and it has fewer obstacles; it is the easier, more pleasant way. But we are to choose the right, the good, the true, and the noble over the easy, the pleasurable, and the wrong. This is what it means to deny oneself.

***Second, to deny yourself means that you do not seek to exalt yourself in the opinion of others, rather you seek to serve them.*** Let us consider **Luke 14:7-11.**

So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: <sup>8</sup>“When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; <sup>9</sup>and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. <sup>10</sup>But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. <sup>11</sup>For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Our Lord was invited to a house for a meal. Others were also invited. He sees the guests scrambling for the places of honor. And so, He gives some instruction in etiquette. He speaks of what was practiced in that day. Places were assigned according to the prestige of the individual. If you sought to sit in the place of prominence, you might be humiliated when you are asked to move downward when your host sees you sitting in the place that belongs to someone more prominent than you. The point is this, if you strive to increase your esteem in the eyes of others, it will result in you being humiliated. The issue, of course, is really not table manners. What the Lord was stressing is recorded after the parable in v. 11. ***The Lord is the one who determines the honor that will be conferred on people. And our concern should only be what He thinks of us. We should not be scrambling about with the motivation of having others exalt us in their estimation.*** We should strive to gain the honor that God confers upon His faithful servants.

A follower of Jesus Christ views the honor that people convey as secondary to receiving the honor that God confers. We seek to please Him so that He will esteem us rather than seeking to please men so that we gain their respect. The disciple of Christ no longer views social status and earthly honor something to be sought. The disciple of Jesus Christ denies himself of these things. They are no longer of primary importance to him. In fact, as a disciple you shrink from these things, if you perceive they detract credit (glory) from the Lord, when people give glory to you instead. If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and thinking rightly, you do not seek to exalt yourself, but rather you seek to serve in whatever capacity the Lord has placed you, even as you wait upon Him to exalt you, if He wills and in His own time.

***And third, to deny yourself means that you deny yourself the notion that you are lord of your own life.*** You have a responsibility to obey your Master, Jesus Christ. His priorities will be embraced and His directives will be followed, even though they may conflict with our own immediate desires or inclinations. And so, your ***love of money*** is renounced, for one cannot serve money and the Lord. Your own ***lusts*** are denied, for they cannot govern your life if Jesus is Lord. Even your ***human relationships*** are subordinated and governed by your relationship with Him. For you cannot love father or mother, spouse or children, or even your own life more than Him. This is the way of following Jesus, and you have happily given yourself to this.

Before we pass on from this first phrase, “let him deny himself”, we might say a word about its specific emphasis.<sup>2</sup> This command is not intended to convey the idea, “to keep on denying yourself”, as though it were an often repeated action, or a continuous action. This action describes the entire life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. When he first became a disciple of Jesus Christ, he denied himself and this is the state in which he lives. Every true disciple of Jesus Christ has denied himself when he was first converted to Jesus Christ. His entire life as a disciple of Jesus Christ may be seen as denying self.

## 2. The one who follows Jesus must *take up his cross daily* (Luke 9:23)

Crucifixion was a common form of execution in the first century. It was a tortuous, extremely painful way to encounter death. Coupled with the physical suffering was the public shame which was associated with this form of death. All regarded the person who was sentenced to this form of death as having been cursed and forsaken of God. And to carry your cross on the way to the place of execution would be accompanied by public ridicule heaped upon you.

There are a few subtle differences between the two accounts of Mark 8:34-37 and Luke 9:23-27. Luke emphasizes that this is a *daily* action on the part of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Mark’s account does not have this emphasis.<sup>3</sup> Mark sets forth taking up the cross in the same manner that one has denied himself. In other words, just as Mark (as does Luke) sets forth denying self as having been done at conversion and characterizes the Christian’s life thereafter as one of self-denial, Mark gives the same idea to taking up one’s cross. What the Holy Spirit is emphasizing through Mark’s Gospel is the character of a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who takes up his cross. It is who we are. What the Holy Spirit is emphasizing in Luke’s Gospel is that the disciple is to take up his cross *daily*. It is what we do.

What then, is the Lord saying to you, if you desire to live as His disciple? A few ideas are being conveyed. *First*, to take up your cross daily as you follow Jesus means that every day *you must be willing to endure shame and suffering in your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ*. A disciple must not refuse to follow Jesus. He must follow Him regardless of the cost to him.

Some cease to follow due to the *shame* they encounter. Take note of Luke 9:26. This is not talking about being embarrassed when ridiculed about being a Christian. And it is not saying here that we have to delight in being humiliated before others. The Lord Jesus Himself “despised the shame” of the cross. What is being emphasized is the willingness to be obedient even if it means enduring shame for doing so.

Some cease to follow due to the *suffering* they encounter. We must be willing to endure all suffering in our lives as we follow Jesus in faith and obedience. We are not to set aside the commandment of God simply because the consequence of believing will result in pain.

Some people, who profess to be Christian, have failed here. They argue that there are limits to which we should have to obey. *“Surely God does not expect me to suffer so; therefore, I am free, even right to set aside the commandment of God!”* Frequently it is worded in this fashion, *“Yes I am to submit and obey, but God does not want me to be a doormat!”* And therefore they say essentially, *“I have gone this far and I have suffered a great deal. Why, I have suffered more than most. But now I have determined that I have suffered enough; and so here I will lay down my cross and walk away. I am sure it is God’s will to do so. He does not want me to go on suffering like this.”* They want the crown of glory that salvation will bring, but they are not willing to wear the crown of thorns that precedes that glorious crown. The pain becomes too great, and they turn away. What the Lord is saying here is that every disciple that desires to “save his life”, in other words, inherit eternal life, must forfeit his life here, if need be, in following Him.

*Second*, to take up your cross and follow Jesus means that *you must regard your former life (apart from Him) as finished*. This is the meaning and statement of baptism. You are saying by your burial in the water that your former independent, self-directed life is over; it is finished. And by your being brought forth from the water you are declaring yourself to live life anew as directed by your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek verb used by Luke is an aorist imperative. It does not convey the idea of time, but rather the aspect as having been a completed action.

<sup>3</sup> Mark sets forth the verb, for taking up one’s cross

But again, you must live this life *daily*, persevering in it. This is not a onetime decision, it is a daily action, if necessary, in order to live as a disciple to Jesus Christ. We must affirm, “I must order my life today according to the Word of God regardless of the consequences to me.”

### 3. The disciple of Jesus must *follow Jesus* (9:23)

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that they must “follow Him.” Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” The verb used for “follow” emphasizes continuous action. The disciple is continuously following Jesus. This is what disciples do. What does this mean precisely?

**a. It implies that we only travel where our Lord has already been.** He does not ask us to do anything that He has not done. Let me remind you of the context. Jesus is preparing to leave Galilee and proceed to Jerusalem where He would suffer and die. We are to follow Him in a similar journey of self-denial and if need be sacrifice and suffering if it comes to that, in order to be faithful in obeying God.

**b. It implies that He is leading us in our course.** He has gone ahead of us. And we are following the course He has blazed for us. This is the idea behind the book of Hebrews-- Christians are the wandering people of God, who are strangers in this world who are following our Lord Jesus through this life as we journey toward our heavenly Canaan where we may receive our inheritance, a place in the heavenly Jerusalem. As the Israelites followed the manifestation of God in the cloud and pillar of fire, we follow our Lord Jesus. As the Shekinah glory led them, our Lord Jesus leads us. But as some fell in the wilderness because they refused to follow Him, so too, those who cease or refuse to follow Jesus will not inherit the promise. But again, the idea is that He is the One Who has gone ahead and has opened up a way for us to follow. And there is no step we might take in our journey that He has not already passed.

**c. It implies that He is leading to an appointed destination.** He is leading us to our heavenly Zion, to a city whose Builder and Maker is God. He has gone on ahead and has arrived to His glory. He bids us to follow Him in the same manner and in the same course He has blazed for us. We look to inherit all that God has promised us through Him, as we follow Him.

**d. It implies obedience. It implies immediate obedience.** He says essentially, “Begin to Follow me now and continue to follow Me no matter what comes.” We are not to put off--procrastinate--in our obedience. We are to “follow” Him *now*! We are not to tarry. We are not to say as King Felix did to Paul, “Go away for a time; when I find time, I will summon you.” No. We say, “Speak Lord. Your servant is listening and I am ready to respond.”

**e. It implies complete obedience.** We are not to procrastinate in obedience, but further, we are not to be selective in our obedience. Partial obedience is no obedience. Partial obedience reveals that you are yet lord of your life and you are choosing what it is you will do and what it is you will not do. You do certain things because it suits you, or because that you see to do so will bring some kind of benefit to you. But the one who is following Jesus obeys Jesus because He is his Lord; that is what true and loyal subjects do when their Sovereign issues to them his decrees.

Do not think that if you do obey one or two commands of the Lord that you have fully satisfied your obligation to Him, that you then you can excuse yourself from following Him in other areas. Consider King Saul who did just that. The Lord through Samuel had commanded King Saul to lead his army against the Amalakites. He was told to destroy everything. He fought against them and defeated them, *except* he spared some sheep and cattle and other things that he deemed valuable. When confronted by Samuel, Saul was rebuked and judged for not having “obeyed the Lord.” *“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft”* (cf. 1 Samuel 15).

Now having considered our text of Luke 9:23-27 in some detail, I would like us to consider our Lord’s words within the larger context of Luke’s Gospel. Within the first half of Luke’s Gospel, there is a focus on obedience to the words of Jesus Christ as an essential aspect of discipleship to Jesus. I would argue that “following Jesus” as His disciple is essentially obeying Jesus as the Lord of one’s life. This is Luke’s emphasis in His Gospel. Let us consider how this unfolds.

## II. Luke's emphasis on obedience to Jesus the Lord

Luke had developed this theme of obedience to Jesus in four stages as his Gospel story is related. These stages may be described in this way:

- (1) First, Luke established that Jesus had **authority**.
- (2) But then Luke began to emphasize that since Jesus has authority, people have a responsibility to **hear** Him.
- (3) But since Jesus has authority, people not only have a responsibility to hear Him, but they are to **obey** Him.
- (4) Lastly Luke showed that those who refuse to hear Him, or those who do hear but refuse to obey Him, will encounter **the judgment of God upon them**.

Let us consider these.

### A. Luke established that Jesus had **authority**.

The early chapters of Luke's Gospel story reveal and reinforce in many different ways to the reader the **authority** that God had given to Jesus Christ. Early in the Gospel Luke recorded the event of Jesus' baptism and the voice of the Father regarding Him. We read,

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. <sup>22</sup>And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21f)

The reader of Luke's account is shown at the outset of Jesus' ministry that this man has God's endorsement. Jesus has great authority in that God the Father has affirmed to Him His favor. Moreover, because the Blessed Holy Spirit has come upon Him, the person of Jesus is immediately invested with incontestable authority.

Upon His departure from the Jordan River, Jesus was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and then "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness in order to be tested by the devil (Luke 4:1). We are shown that whatever occurs and whatever our Lord would say or do, He would do so with God's power and God's endorsement. Because of our Lord's victory over the devil's temptation in the wilderness (4:1-13), we read of our Lord in Luke 4:14f:

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus returned **in the power of the Spirit to Galilee**, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. <sup>15</sup>And He taught in their synagogues, **being glorified by all**.

Here our Lord Jesus is shown to have authority as He began to minister in Galilee.

We then read of the synagogue gathering in His hometown of Nazareth. On this occasion when Jesus taught in the synagogue, God established the fact that He had given to Jesus the authority to teach the people. We then read a summary statement:

<sup>31</sup>Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. <sup>32</sup>And they were astonished at His teaching, for **His word was with authority**. (Luke 4:31f)

What Jesus taught regarding the Scriptures was authoritative, because He taught with authority. He did so to such a degree that His hearers were astonished with the authority of His teaching.

But not only did Jesus have authority to teach the people in the synagogues, we also read that He had authority within the physical world in which He moved. We read that He had authority over **the fish** of the sea. In Luke 5:1ff we read of His authority on display.

So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, <sup>2</sup>and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

<sup>4</sup>When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

<sup>5</sup>But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." <sup>6</sup>And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. (Luke 5:1-6)

We may trace Luke's emphasis on the authority of Jesus through a number of the episodes in these earlier chapters of his Gospel. We will not address these accounts in detail, but only draw our attention to a few of them. The episode in which Jesus healed *the paralytic man* served to show that God has given to Jesus even the authority to forgive sins (5:17-26). Later, a *Roman centurion* recognized Jesus' authority. He said to Jesus, "For *I also am a man set under authority* (i.e. with authority), having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (7:8f). This Gentile army officer recognized the great authority that Jesus possessed in that He could issue a decree and his servant would be healed, even from a distance. Luke shows that Jesus has authority over *the Sabbath Day*. Jesus said of Himself, "The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath" (6:5). Jesus even had the authority to raise a dead man to life and restore him to his mother (7:11-17). Luke in many ways demonstrated that Jesus had unassailable authority, which no one could legitimately deny or dismiss, which no one or nothing could thwart or resist. He had authority as the Son of Man, the Promised King, authority that God the Father had conferred upon Him, authority that was manifest through the Holy Spirit leading Him, empowering Him, enabling Him, and affirming Him in His words and actions.

**B.** But upon Luke establishing the authority of Jesus of Nazareth, Luke began to emphasize that since Jesus has authority, **people have a responsibility to hear Him.**

Luke emphasized this truth: *because God had sent Jesus Christ and because He had given to Him such authority, all people everywhere should give their utmost attention and effort to hear and receive His teaching.* God promised great blessing to them who do. But He has assured there would be great calamity for those who fail or refuse to hear Him. And so, the great emphasis of these early chapters of Luke's Gospel is that God has given Jesus of Nazareth the ability and the authority to communicate His Word, His will, to His people. Therefore what is being conveyed is that all people everywhere should be very earnest and attentive to desire to listen and to learn from Him. And as we read Luke's account, the unfolding of the story presses upon us that we, also, give unquestioned regard to everything He says. We should pour over God's Word attentively, scrutinizing it closely, seeking understand it thoroughly.

When our Lord left Nazareth and travelled to the shores of Galilee, there, too, the people acknowledged His teaching authority. But in contrast to the people of Nazareth, we read of the desire of the people near the Sea of Galilee to hear His teaching. We read of the crowds in **Luke 5:1**, "So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him *to hear the word of God*, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret." What is suggested by this is that all people should come to Jesus in order to hear from Him His teaching of the Word of God. Later a description that Luke provides of the crowds suggests a favorable response to Jesus that all people should render unto Him. In **Luke 6:17** we read,

And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, *who came to hear Him...*

In Luke 9 we read of the God the Father commanding Jesus' disciples to hear Jesus. It was when Jesus was transfigured before Peter, John, and James.

A cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. **Hear Him!**" (Luke 9:34f).

Luke emphasizes that all people should hear what Jesus teaches, for God has given Him great authority. He speaks forth the Word of God when He teaches the people.

**C. But then thirdly, Luke emphasizes that if Jesus has this authority, then not only should He be heard, but He should be heeded.** His words should be obeyed by all people everywhere.

Luke conveys the responsibility that all people have to obey Jesus' words through a number of ways. For example, we read in Luke 8:22ff.

And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. <sup>23</sup>But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. <sup>24</sup>And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. <sup>25</sup>But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? **For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!**" <sup>26</sup>Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. (Luke 8:22-26)

Notice how the winds and water are personified so that it would seem that the Lord commanded them as though they were persons, and they obeyed Him immediately. This is one of the subtle ways in which Luke shapes his narrative to suggest that people, too, should obey Him. "Even the winds and water obey Him when they heard Him speak to them; should not people who hear Him also obey Him?"

We may also read similarly earlier in Luke's Gospel the account of the fever of Peter's mother-in-law departing from her at the command of Jesus.

Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and **it left her**. And immediately she arose and served them. (Luke 4:38f)

Notice here what is similar to what we read in the other episode. Just as Luke personified the wind and sea, so Luke also personifies the fever, presenting the fever as a person who obeys Jesus' word to him. The fever obeys, the winds and water obey, should not all people obey Him also?

Let us look at one more place. **Luke 8:26-33** read:

<sup>26</sup>Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. <sup>27</sup>And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. <sup>28</sup>When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" <sup>29</sup>**For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.** For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

<sup>30</sup>Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?"

And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. <sup>31</sup>**And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.**

<sup>32</sup>Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. **So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them.** <sup>33</sup>Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.



Demons could not but obey Jesus' command to them.<sup>4</sup> The implication is that all people should obey Jesus.

**D.** And then *fourthly*, later in Luke's Gospel an emphasis is given that those who refuse to hear and obey His Word will encounter the wrath of God. ***God's judgment is upon those who refuse to submit to Jesus as Lord.***

There are many places in which this theme is presented, of which we have no time presently to address. But let us turn to read **Luke 11:27f.**

As He said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" But He said, ***"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"***

Here we have our Lord pronouncing the one to be "blessed" who both hears ***and obeys*** His words. "Blessedness" describes the one who is in a right relationship with God. The favor of God is upon him. The one who hears and obeys has salvation. Only the one who hears, and as a result of believing Jesus' words, obeys His Word, has salvation. He is a blessed man of God.<sup>5</sup>

To underscore the teaching of our Lord for the essential need to not only hear but to obey His Words, let us consider the last portion of our Lord's sermon recorded in **Luke 6:46-49**. Here we read that a true disciple of Jesus is one who both hears and obeys His Lord.

<sup>46</sup>"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? <sup>47</sup>Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: <sup>48</sup>he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. <sup>49</sup>But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Here is clear teaching that an evidence of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ and thereby be a citizen of the Kingdom of God is when one ***"hears" the Words of the King, and then he "acts upon them."*** That our Lord would have to say something like this before this large crowd suggests there are those who do just that--they ***"hear"*** His Words, but fail to ***"heed"*** (obey) them. There is no salvation for these persons. ***No salvation, no benefit, will come to the one who claims to know or believe in Jesus, whose life is unaffected by Him. For the essence of being a citizen of the Kingdom of God is to be governed by the Lord of the Kingdom, Jesus Christ.***

And the passage that we considered earlier in Luke 9 is the culminating statement of our Lord Jesus to His followers. All that we have considered in these many episodes in Luke's narrative set the stage for the culminating call of Jesus in Luke 9:23-27. He gave this word to them just prior to His departure from Galilee to travel to Jerusalem, where He would suffer, die, and then rise again, entering into His glory.

<sup>23</sup>Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. <sup>25</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself

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<sup>4</sup> Just as a side note: Luke is also building a case against the unbelieving Jews. Luke tells of fevers, winds, and waves, even demons recognizing Jesus' authority and obeying Him, but the Jews did not and would not obey Him. Even demons were more aware and responsive to what God was doing through Jesus Christ than were the Jews. They were culpable.

<sup>5</sup> By the way, this woman who called out to Jesus, may be regarded as the first Mary worshipper. Jesus rebuked here for she did not speak the truth. Jesus declared that those who hear and keep His Words are more blessed than even being His mother, Mary.

destroyed or lost? <sup>26</sup>For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

**Conclusion:**

Let us purpose to live before the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to live for ourselves, but our lives are to live for the purpose of pleasing Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 read

For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that *those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them for them and rose again.*

This is the secret to true life and happiness. When we insist that we will live for ourselves, we will be experience disappointment, hurt, frustration and anger when things do not go our way. And, they never do or will to our satisfaction. God created us to live unto Him. We find fulfilment, satisfaction, joy and peace when we order our lives according to the purpose for which we were created. Sin is the notion that

“I will not live for the Lord; I will live for myself. I will do what I desire, what I purpose, what satisfies me. And anyone who thinks that he is going to have a relationship with me better have that understood at the outset.”

But those who are true believers in Jesus Christ--His disciples--will deny themselves and live for Him who died for them and rose again.

If we have failed, and certainly if we have before now refused, may the Lord grant us the gift of repentance that we may turn from our resistance, from our rebellion, and submit ourselves to the One to Whom the Father has given all authority. And then may He enable us by His grace to be assured of His acceptance of us, and to be assured of His glorious promises of eternal blessings.

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Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Savior,  
Who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)

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