

CHAPTER 3

AUTHENTIC WHOLEHEARTED DISCIPLESHIP

—A DECISION—

An Expository Study of *Luke 9:23-27, 51-62*

PREFACE TO CHAPTER 3

The importance of a life of devotion to one's Savior is predominant in this teaching of Jesus. Wholeheartedness in discipleship is essential for our devotion to be really meaningful. Devotion that leads to this wholehearted discipleship is contingent upon one fundamental, namely, an absolute possession and keen awareness of the comprehensiveness of the Kingdom of God. This comprehension of the Kingdom of God is to what Jesus referred in *John 3:3*, *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* The sight to which Jesus referred is mental comprehension of all the Kingdom's distinctive realities for fallen men. This sight comes only to the regenerate, to the believer, to the authentic disciple. And likewise, comprehending the Kingdom of God is far more than knowing it exists, or knowing and understanding its spiritual nature on earth today. Comprehension of God's Kingdom, as it exists today for humans' inclusion, depends upon one's understanding its redemptive and delivery aspects that qualify fallen humans for the Kingdom's benefits. To *see* the kingdom of God is to perceive it as it truly is in its necessary redemptive aspects. The cross of Christ is the comprehensive aspect of the Kingdom of God that must be clearly understood and appreciated if one is to live a life of devotion to Christ. That is contained in Christ's emphatic teaching on wholehearted discipleship. In fact, He states most emphatically that one's wholeheartedness in Christian discipleship is determined by one's perception of His Kingdom as largely redemptive in nature. Indeed, Christ's own words make that clear,

But I am telling you a certainty [beforehand], some of the ones standing here will not in any way begin to taste for themselves [this] death [to self] until they begin to perceive and comprehend the kingdom of God.
Luke 9:27 ADT⁰

⁰ Author's Distinctive Translation, and thus designated ADT throughout.

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VOLUME III, CHAPTER 3
AUTHENTIC WHOLEHEARTED
DISCIPLESHIP
—A DECISION—

OR

THE CHRISTIAN'S DECISIVE WHOLEHEARTED
DEVOTION TO CHRIST

Luke 9:23-27, 51-62

²³ *And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

²⁴ *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*

²⁵ *For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?*

²⁶ *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels.*

²⁷ *But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.*

⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

⁵² *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.*

⁵³ *And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

⁵⁷ *And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

⁵⁸ *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

⁵⁹ *And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

⁶⁰ *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

⁶¹ *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

⁶² *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* *Luke 9:23-27, 51-53, 57-62*

Jesus exhibited in His life and ministry a wholehearted devotion, which now He asks of His disciples. This wholeheartedness is a walk on the same road of death to self¹ that He walked. Jesus requires this replicated wholeheartedness in His disciples because only by His own kind of devotion to God's will can those called to glorification reach it.² The wholehearted disciple suffers for the Kingdom and its subjects as Christ suffered for the Kingdom and its subjects. Not that Christian suffering is in the same way effectual for others as was Christ's, but when authentic disciples follow Jesus, their lives become somewhat similar in devotion to God's purposes of love as was His. As a Man Jesus came to certain benchmark experiences through suffering that developed His human character

¹ Referencing Christ's death to self in no way implies any evil or any thing less than perfection in Him. For the spotless Son of God death to self was the surrender to the Father's will to redeem man from his fallen state. A relinquishment occurred in eternity through a covenant within the Godhead, but for the Man Christ Jesus, self-death was a living reality day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute.

² *Philippians 1:29; Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:17-18* respectively.

³ *Hebrews 4:15; 5:8; Philippians 2:7-9*

alongside the fullest scope of His unchanged divine virtues.³ Likewise, the required wholeheartedness of giving all to the Kingdom brings personal profit as well as gain for the Kingdom. The majestic rationale of the Kingdom's growth and progress is as Christ Jesus gave all for us and thereby profited both the Kingdom and Himself, even so we also are to give all for the King and His Kingdom and thereby profit Him and His Kingdom. Our text teaches that as Christ's wholeheartedness advanced the Kingdom, so must ours also. As Christ saved His life for the Kingdom by losing it to this world, so are we.

Required Devotion

Wholehearted devotion to Christ for His Kingdom's good is not an "either/or" proposition. This is a requirement for all disciples. In the verses of our text Jesus first challenged His disciples to enter upon the road of complete and unreserved wholeheartedness in the words, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*, which He then explained and amplified. This is not some decision for later life. This is not something that can be put off until a more convenient time. One cannot come to Jesus for salvation and not give to Him complete devotion to His cause for the Kingdom's good. The Sovereign King dictated that entrance into and discipleship within His Kingdom demands an absolute surrender of all, and a complete devotion with every other consideration of this life. As the Despotic Ruler of an absolutely restrictive Kingdom,⁴ He mandates to every potential and authentic disciple the complete giving up all to Him and to His Kingdom's majestic love-philosophy. Every disciple of King Jesus must give his all for the Kingdom's profit in the same way as He gave His all for the Kingdom's profit. God will bring to light before the entire creation just how His required devotion profited the Kingdom, as He will ours also.⁵

⁴ *Matthew 7:13-14*, q.v. the exposition of these verses in Volume I, Chapter III, Narrow Discipleship, pp. 22-46.

⁵ *Philippians 2:10-11; I Peter 1:7; I Corinthians 3:12-13; Revelation 3:12*

The Context and Analysis

This teaching of Jesus in *Luke 9:23-27* and the incidents in *9:51-62*, both our text, occurred during an especially important period of training for His disciples. Though separate events, they are vitally related. It was in that period of ministry that Jesus began to emphasize His death, burial, and resurrection,⁶ and to apply His own crucifixion to the lives of His disciples.⁷ In *verse 22*, after introducing His disciples to the death that He had given Himself to finalize, He then applied the reality of His own death to the reality of every disciple's death to self in *verses 23-27*. Luke arranged teaching excerpts and episodes during this period for that effect also. That is, he helped apply Christ's uttered doctrine during this special time to the recorded episodes during that time. Luke arranged his Gospel so that what Christ taught would be enforced and amplified in the events that he recorded. He saw the applications that Christ had made of His doctrine during this time and did the same in the arrangement of his account of Jesus' life. The two incidents in *Luke 9:51-62* are examples of Luke's style in this area. Luke has grouped the two episodes recorded in *Luke 9:51-62* in order to relate them to Jesus' teaching recorded previously in *Luke 9:23-27*. Luke means especially to elucidate and illustrate in *Luke 9:51-62* what he had indicated Jesus saying in *9:23-27*.

Luke intends for his readers to relate the first of these incidents in *9:51-56* to Jesus' spirit and entire devotion to saving men's lives by giving His own life for theirs. This wholehearted death to self was revealed in His doctrine of *9:22*, *The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day*. He was resigned to a physical death only because He had already resigned Himself in self-death to it, as displayed in the

⁶ See occasions of this repeated emphasis during this time in His teaching in *Mark 8:31-32; 9:30-32; & 10:32-34*.

⁷ See this application in *Mark 8:34-37; 9:33-35; & 10:35-45*, which correspond with the Scriptures in fn. 6 above.

incident recorded in 9:51-56. In the second incident in 9:57-62, Luke shows how disciples' lives must be given up to Christ's cause in order to save them for the Kingdom's cause through a similar death to self as His. All disciples must submit themselves to become wholeheartedly devoted disciples. He had emphatically taught this in 9:23-27, *verse 23* being its essential quality, *And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* That is, "If anyone wills to come after me, he must live this same death to self as I presently live until the Cross."

First, therefore, we will take note of Christ's intense teaching on wholehearted devotion in *Luke 9:23-26*. After His announcement of His own death in *Luke 9:22*, Jesus laid down His absolute requirements for authentic discipleship in *Luke 9:23-26*, which are wholly based and founded upon His own requirements for Himself.

Secondly, we will consider the related truth on wholehearted devotion uttered by Jesus in *Luke 9:27*. This truth has been variously interpreted. However, it relates to the context in which it was spoken, that context being a wholehearted death to self. After announcing His own wholeheartedness that would climax in a Cross (*Luke 9:22*), and after announcing His required wholeheartedness in His disciples and its rationale (*Luke 9:23-26*), Christ then revealed the required divine order, or only procedure, by which His required wholeheartedness—a *death to self*—is possible for any son of Adam (*Luke 9:27*), *But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of [this] death [to self], till they see the kingdom of God.*

Thirdly, we will consider Luke's illustrative examples in *Luke 9:51-62* and of what this wholehearted devotion through a death to self consists. In the first illustration of *Luke 9:51-56* we will see Jesus' wholeheartedness lived out in His devotion to the cross awaiting Him in Jerusalem. In the second illustration of

Luke 9:57-62, Luke shows what disciples' wholeheartedness is (or is not) in practical and real-life situations.

In accord with Christ's wholehearted devotion and its requisite in disciples, the arrangement of our examination will be:

I. The Requirement of Wholehearted Devotion, *Luke 9:23*.

II. The Rationale of Wholehearted Devotion, *Luke 9:24-26*.

III. The Rational Accomplishment of Wholehearted Devotion, or The Only Means by which this Wholehearted Devotion is Possible, *Luke 9:27*.

IV. The Remarkable Wholehearted Devotion of Jesus, *Luke 9:51-56*.

V. The Refusal of Wholehearted Devotion from Three Unauthentic Disciples, *Luke 9:57-62*.

I. THE REQUIREMENT OF WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.
Luke 9:23 KJV

And he said to them all, When anyone exercises his will to be giving allegiance to be my supporter, be my follower, he must begin immediately to disregard the interests of self, begin immediately to take up his cross as a habit of daily life, and must be constantly walking the same road that I am now walking.

Luke 9:23 ADT⁸

THE CONTEXT: JESUS' WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION TO THE CROSS

Jesus had evoked a profession from His inner circle of disciples through a question, *Whom say ye that I am?* Whereupon, Peter speaking for the twelve said, *The Christ of God,* (verse 20). Then Jesus *straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing [of His Deity]; saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day* (verses 21 and 22). This reference to His passion in crucifixion was given as Jesus' reason for the prohibition against their speaking of His Deity. His acceptance as King was not a problem, many of the people believed. His acceptance as a Prophet was not a problem, many of the people listened. But His acceptance as the Priest was a problem, especially if His Deity was widely believed. Therefore, in order to fulfill His main objective as Priest to offer Himself as the offering for His people, He must keep quiet His Deity so the multitude would not hinder His subjection to the predetermined death of the cross. His wholehearted devotion to God's will in the cross was evidenced in the prohibition against indiscriminately announcing His Deity.

⁸ Author's Distinctive Translation, and thus designated ADT throughout.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

From this time until the cross, Jesus would repeatedly emphasize the coming crucifixion. After the resurrection this repeated teaching served to strengthen His disciples. Its remembrance would convince them that the cross was planned and was the strategic significance of His incarnation. But for now the disciples had no understanding of Jesus' allusions either to His death or resurrection. Therefore, they had trouble understanding this reference in *verse 23* to their own death in themselves. They would never show much self-denial or wholehearted devotion either to Christ's real ministry or to His cross until they fully understood the cross. After six months of frequent references to self-denial, to a death to self, to greatness in serving others, to being "chief" only through being least of all, the disciples at the last supper were still arguing about who of them was greatest.⁹ Until they understood the nature of Christ's Kingdom in the Gospel, they could never be authentic wholehearted disciples. But we have no such blindness; therefore our accountability to exercise a decisive wholehearted devotion both to Christ's real ministry in the Gospel and to our own crosses is particularly acute.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE AND DECISIONS

And he said to them all, whosoever will come after me.

Just to whom is this requirement addressed? For whom are such requirements obligatory? Jesus makes clear that His requirements are for any who would approach Him expecting to become an authentic disciple—a true believer, a converted saint. Mark clarifies who Luke referenced in the words, *them all*,

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them [the people and His disciples], Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. [Added emph.]

Mark 8:34

⁹ Luke 22:24

Mark marks these to whom Jesus made this demand as his disciples and *the people*. The people were the multitude, the crowd, the lost and the saved without distinction. In other words, for any approach to Jesus for forgiveness, for salvation from sin, for gracious healing, and for eternal life, these requirements must be met. This is lordship salvation in its clearest concept. Jesus must be accepted as Lord as well as Savior to benefit from either. The *whosoever* seems not to be limited in any way to formerly saved persons or to backsliding converts, but to *whosoever will come after Jesus*. And since Jesus placed no restriction upon who can come after Him, we must not either. *Whosoever will come after Jesus* for whatsoever reason one may come after Jesus must *deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*.

Jesus had spoken of His death exclusively to His disciples, but to the multitudes and to His disciples He now turns to speak of their death if they would *will* to be His followers. In fact, *verses 23-26* are the eternal conditions by which one may personally share in the scene of the transfiguration in *verses 28-36*. The requirements of wholehearted devotion in *verse 23*, when met, will end in being with Jesus Christ, followed by the alteration to be like Jesus Christ as He was manifest in the transfiguration in *verses 28-36*. The death of self presented here by Jesus is an absolute cessation of all self-activity. What Jesus requires in this *verse 23* is a submission to suffering. The suffering of Christ will move into the disciple to become suffering with Christ and must be accepted willingly into one's own life in order to be transfigured into His likeness.¹⁰ It is a complete abandonment of self to Christ. When one comes to the end of "self",¹¹ and exercises one's will to surrender to Christ's will, then the alteration into Christ's likeness has begun in regeneration.

¹⁰ *Romans 8:17*, and see the Author's reference to this principle in a brief exposition of *Romans 8:18-25* in the booklet, Our Glory at Christ's Second Coming.

¹¹ I.e. the Ego, the Id, the essence of one's person and drives and makeup.

If any man will. The word *will* is significant. Literally it is, “If any man is actively willing to be coming”¹² after me. The activity of one’s will is emphasized as being continuously exercised. The will is a major constituent in the soul of man. This is indeed wholeheartedness. *After me* is literally, “to be coming behind me,” such usage meaning, “to give allegiance and support to.” This occurs in the natural man only when God has enlightened one’s will in order that one can be giving active and continuous allegiance to Jesus Christ. There is an interlocking mechanism involved in all this. A person wills to come behind Jesus and exercises a prerogative of his own self, or soulish being, to be an adherent of Jesus Christ, and in this “willing” process he would of necessity also deny every other segment of the soul. The soul is really an entity. It works as a unit. When the will moves it has with it the reasoning of the mind, which will carry along with it the emotions—the likes and dislikes. Hence, it is genuine; this is authentic wholehearted discipleship. Therefore, in this verse Christ limits the way to achieve authentic discipleship as only by becoming wholeheartedly devoted to Him.

Christ gives three requirements regarding His divine order: renouncing self, shouldering a cross, and taking a road just like Christ’s road. “This order is not chronological but is logical. Together the three indicate true conversion, followed by lifelong sanctification.”¹³ This is not accomplished in one’s own power but in the abilities of the Holy Spirit, Whose Presence is Christ’s constant Indwelling Presence.¹⁴

WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION RENOUNCES ONESELF

let him deny himself.

The Challenged Will. The English translations of this phrase are inadequate and imply a sort of suggestion from Christ. However, the Greek is a third person singular aorist imperative mood that has no English parallel and must be translated with the

¹² Present tense followed with a present infinitive.

¹³ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Luke* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 498

permissive idea, “let him.” According to the Greek grammars, the imperative mood is that which “expresses action that is to be realized by the exercise of the will of one person upon that of another.”¹⁵ The use of this imperative mood means that Jesus is saying in effect,

You are exercising your will to come after Me to be My follower and supporter. Then first of all your entire will must yield to a complete denial of yourself just because that is the expression of My will over your will. You absolutely must submit to My will wholeheartedly by denying yourself completely.

The Instinctive Beginning. The aorist tense in the phrase has to do with action just beginning what has not yet started. *You must begin to deny yourself, that is, the beginning of self denial must accompany the will to become My follower.* One could translate this, “He must begin immediately to deny himself and to disregard self-interests when his will has chosen to follow Me.” In other words, when one wills to follow Jesus there is also inherently and instinctively a corresponding cessation of one’s will acting independently of Christ’s will. Always, that produces wholehearted devotion to Jesus.

The Denial. This commanded and instinctive denial is from the Greek word, arneomai, “to deny, disown,...to renounce, decline, refuse.” It was used in the ancient Greek world to decline an offered office or duty. Authentic wholehearted discipleship requires a giving up the position of honor to and authority of one’s self, one’s Id, one’s Ego, one’s soul—mind, will, emotions. When a monarch voluntarily gives up his throne he has denied himself; so the follower of Jesus Christ gives up the throne of self, the Id, the Ego, in order to enthrone another, Jesus Christ. The true believer is called upon to renounce himself in favor of a greater end, namely the purpose of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom

¹⁵ Ray Summers, Essentials of New Testament Greek (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), p. 112.

of Love. This is a sacrifice toward a greater end than for self. It is for Him Who is always for others as well. This required wholeheartedness is a moral and spiritual discipline of finality, which involves complete self-denial and surrender for His sake.

WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION SHOULDERS

ONE'S OWN CROSS FOR LIFE

take up his cross daily

Advocating Suicide. Christ demands a life of absolute allegiance. The same third person singular aorist imperative mood is here used. This is an untranslatable imperative requirement that is so decisive that the verb *shoulder* is the best rendering, meaning, *He must shoulder his cross every day without exception*. Jesus refers here to living as a dead person. To *shoulder his cross* is a reference to the very cross upon which Christ's follower is to be crucified. To shoulder *his own cross* is to exert one's energies to bring about one's own death. Christians are to help in their own crucifixion by carrying the very implement that will be used in their own execution. Christ's cross interprets our cross. Jesus did everything He could possibly do with His life's activities that would help, contribute to, and accomplish His own death. That is our own cross; that is what it is to shoulder our own cross.

Life Long. *Daily* is a key word in Jesus' requirements. This is no one-time calamitous event in life. Indeed conversion begins with a catastrophic event, but it continues daily throughout one's life just as Jesus' cross bearing was His life-long commitment. He did always everything that would fulfill His supreme mission in life: a death by crucifixion. Customarily, Christians' are not granted grace to endure a death by crucifixion, but are gifted with such spiritual gifts as save and edify the Body of Christ, the Church. *Daily* means whatever spiritual gift or gifts one possesses must become the priority of one's life. Every day the authentic disciple puts one's ministry in His Body, the Church, first. Death to self means every activity of one's life is serving

one thing and one thing only, namely, the specific fulfillment of one's ministry in the Body of Christ.

A Grace Provision. Though this commanded death to self is affiliated with one's own will, no person can by himself accomplish it. Notwithstanding, Jesus commands an obedience that the disciple can truly accomplish, but how can he? A provision of grace in the baptismal influence of the Holy Spirit makes this altogether possible for every believer. Paul wrote of this grace as being the sole source of his life of obedience.¹⁶ The result of this grace given by Christ is twofold. First this granted grace results in the salvation of the believer, his regeneration and justification.¹⁷ The second result is the endowment of the believer with the spiritual gifts to function in the Body, the Church.¹⁸ Jesus' words in *Luke 9:23* make clear that Christ has called every believing disciple to live a dead-to-self Christian life. Therefore, *his grace which was bestowed upon me and this grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ* must include the necessary gifts of grace, favor, and endowment to perform such a task as shouldering one's own cross in a life of submission to Him.

WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION TRAVELS CHRIST'S ROAD OF
COMMITMENT
Follow me

This is another third person singular aorist imperative mood, a strict requirement. To *follow* Christ is a necessary link to what else He has required, and means to walk the same road as Jesus walked. The Greek word used, akoloutheo, means "to follow, to imitate." The word is used with the associative-instrumental case, the idea being to follow with another. This implies fellowship or joint participation in an ensuing life with Him—a

¹⁶ *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, I Corinthians 15:10; see also Ephesians 3:7-8; II Corinthians 12:9-10*

¹⁷ *Ephesians 2:8*

¹⁸ *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, Ephesians 4:7*

partnership, a side-by-side walking with each disciple. Thus “to follow Christ” has come to mean: “To join Jesus as a disciple, to cleave steadfastly to Him, conform wholly to His example in living, and, if need be, in dying.”¹⁹ This requirement becomes a promise of His abiding Presence to every authentic disciple. The strictness of this requirement leaves no possibility of any genuine disciple ever not following Christ. The imperative means His will overpowers every authentic disciple’s will. This *follow me* will be effected by Christ in His every son. His authentic disciples do indeed walk the same road that He walked. The unity of purpose that Jesus Christ had with the Father was unquestioning obedience to His will with a complete emptying of Himself to do everything necessary for the accomplishment of the solitary purpose of the cross. The same unity of purpose exists between Christ and disciple.

What was unique about Jesus’ road, and what will be the uniqueness of our following Jesus down our very similar road? We have compiled five peculiarities of Jesus’ road of life that will likewise be every authentic disciple’s peculiarities in life.

- #1. Jesus gave Himself up to travel light with no secure place to lay His head.²⁰
- #2. Jesus was ever mindful of the ultimate destiny of His life on earth—death.²¹
- #3. Jesus gave up everything in order to yield up complete obedience to the Holy Spirit.²²
- #4. Jesus’ total purpose and joy in life was grounded upon fulfilling God’s will, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day.²³
- #5. Jesus shared in compassion with others, and in love for man as He passed down His life’s road. What moment passed by that He knew not the feelings of others’ infirmities?²⁴

¹⁹ Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the New Testament, Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), p. 29.

²⁰ *Luke 9:58* ²¹ *John 12:27; Luke 12:50* ²² *Philippians 2:7* ²³ *John 8:29; 15:10* ²⁴ *Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:15.*

For the disciples at that time, *follow me* meant in one sense, “Be ready for your own death anytime, and keep on following Me.” But a disciple can follow Christ in this way only so long as he is alive, meaning, “Live out your life in a constant mindset of crucifixion.” Or as Paul put it, *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.*²⁵ It may never come to actual death, but be ready always. If this is to be fulfilled as Christ has required, disciples must as their daily program, (1) In some manner keep always in view a note to “self” that says, “I don’t know you. You have nothing to do with real living.” (2) Keep this legal pronouncement, which is embodied in Christ’s *follow me*, uppermost before the mind’s eye, “You are pronounced dead—as good as dead and at any moment are to be called upon for death.” (3) Keep rehearsing in one’s mind, “My fate is sealed. There is no chance for reprieve or pardon. This is my lot for as long as I shall live.” Christ’s road was all of that, and our road is that if it is like His; that is what it means to obey Jesus’ command to *follow me*.

²⁵ *Galatians 2:20*

II. THE RATIONALE OF WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

²⁴*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*

²⁵*For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?*

²⁶*For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels.*
Luke 9:24-26 KJV

²⁴*For whoever chooses to save his ability to choose what he decides and prefers, will lose that ability to choose; but whoever chooses to lose his power to decide to benefit himself in favor of benefiting me, will save his powers to choose what he decides and likes.*

²⁵*For what is a man being profited having acquired possession of the whole world, but his own self having ruined and forfeited.*

²⁶*For whosoever makes ugly or mars me and therefore my words, this one the Son of man will mar and make ugly when he comes in the glory of himself and of the Father and of the holy angels.*
Luke 9:24-26 ADT

Christ has a rational argument for such stringent requirements to be met by His hearers. He sets forth three sensible reasons why it is imperative for every disciple to renounce self, to shoulder a cross, and to take His road of inevitable crucifixion. He has demanded absolute allegiance and now gives adequate reasons for such allegiance. These reasons make good sense if reasonably considered. He begins each of these three deductions in each of these three verses with a *For*. This threefold repeating of *For* signifies three assertions, one after the other, which affirm the

reasonableness of men obeying His requirements. Each rationale has somewhat to do with allegiance to Him over any allegiance to oneself.

RATIONALE # 1: ONE'S CHOICES WILL BE LOST, verse 24

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Luke 9:24 KJV

For whoever chooses to save his ability to choose what he decides and prefers, will lose that ability to choose; but whoever chooses to lose his power to decide to benefit himself in favor of benefiting me, will save his powers to choose what he decides and likes.

Luke 9:24 ADT

Christ's strong argument for allegiance to Him and for obedience to His strict requirements is begun in the area of the soul. He nearly plays on the Greek words, psuche, translated *life*, with the word, thele, translated *will*. Psuche is the soul, the individual life of humans. It is that quality that sets man above animals or irrational creatures. It is the person, the personality or psyche that makes choices based upon what an individual likes and dislikes, or upon what his mind reasons is good or bad. It is a noun; it is the person—what he or she is in reality that makes him or her a person capable of rational thought and behavior. On the other hand, thele is a verb, being the exercising of one's will. It designates making choices based on the *life* or soul or psuche that he is. Exercising *will* is what the psuche or soul does. It is the psuche that wills whatever is willed by a person. In considering *will*, one must include the mind and likes or dislikes that determine what one wills. The volition is the exercise of the psuche or soul, or *life* as it is translated in the Authorized Version.

Therefore, Christ rationalizes if one chooses or wills not to deny oneself and not to follow Him, not to bear a cross throughout one's *life*, then he will lose his psuche. That is, he will be exercising his *will* that exists in his psuche to lose his psuche—his *life*, his soul, his ability to be a psuche or to exercise

all its blessed prerogatives. The person who refuses Christ's requirements is using what sets him above all other creatures to *lose* what sets him above all creatures. The very exercise of the psuche, *life*, in that way for those choices, is to end the psuche. What Christ demands in verse twenty-three—to die to self and live in constant crucifixion—will end in deliverance for his psuche—his ability to make choices, to choose what one likes and to avoid what is disliked. To *lose* one's *life*, psuche, now will result in saving one's *life*, psuche, forever; but to exercise one's psuche now in an attempt to *save* one's psuche—one's ability to choose what one likes and to avoid what is disliked—will result in losing that ability after all. Christ is presenting a “no win” scenario. It is a lose/lose proposition.

RATIONALE # 2: THIS LIFE'S PROFIT WILL BE LOST, verse 25

*For what is a man advantaged, if he gains the whole world,
and loses himself, or is cast away?* Luke 9:25 KJV

*For what is a man being benefited having acquired
possession of the whole world, but himself having ruined and
forfeited?* Luke 9:25 ADT

Whatever else this life here and now constitutes, its most prized real property is the life possessed. The significant Greek word used by Jesus is heauton, translated *himself*. It expresses an action turned back upon the subject. It is a word that denotes a throwing back upon one what the subject accomplishes. In this case of Christ's usage, the man who acquires possession of the whole world will in that process, and subsequent possession, throw back upon himself a personal ruin and forfeiture of his only real property, *himself*. The real value of life here and now is not at all related to what one possesses of objects, materials, and things, but is the life itself, the activity of living, existing, animation. When possession of anything else of this world is uppermost, ruin is all that is gained for one's living and animation. Because possessing has become primary, possessing the world brings forfeiture to the life that exists only to possess.

Christ claims that He alone is the one possession that is a living and existing, an animation that will prove to have been a profit produced from this life. One may go through this life with no possession of objects, materials, or things, but if one lives for, exists for, and is animated for Him to the exclusion of this world of things, that one will find the true profit from this life here on earth. Jesus' rationale makes for a strong argument in favor of heeding His call to wholehearted devotion to Him.

The loss of the real value of one's life on earth means its forfeiture in the eternal lake of fire. The original intent for man's life on earth was to live as an extension of God, and it must be realized if one is to escape destruction. Gaining the world is not the grand achievement of man. Physical possession was never part of man's destiny on earth. From the very beginning man was told merely to exercise dominion over the earth, not to revel and relish and rapture in owning it. God said exercise dominion not "Zest and glee in monopoly of it." The human race is simply a stranger and pilgrim, each member of the race is merely a temporary proprietor not a possessor in this world. For *the world is passing away, and the lust thereof,*²⁶ but *we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.*²⁷ Christians give up owning things now, but will in the new heaven and new earth gain it all and share in it all as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.²⁸ Christians own nothing of this old world now and must have a mindset of no possession of any of it, but at a later date authentic disciples shall own all that God owns. This is the place and promise of authentic discipleship.

When a man's life is lost concerning the intent that God has for human life on earth, then that life is in a state of destruction as far as God is concerned. Man's life must be put to the use for which the God Who created it desired always—serving, representing, and glorifying its Creator—else it is already *cast away*, forfeited, destroyed, lost. Jesus Christ alone is the

²⁶ I John 2:17 ²⁷ II Peter 3:13 ²⁸ Romans 8:17

possessor of men's lives so as to make them profitable to God in glorifying Him. He uses them to further His own work of bringing all creation into submission to Himself and then to God.²⁹ Except a man is willing to devote himself to Christ's required death to self in cross bearing, He is himself forfeited and purposeless. Authentic discipleship under Jesus' Lordship alone fulfills God's original intent in creating the human race.

RATIONALE # 3: THE NEXT LIFE'S GLORY WILL BE LOST, verse 26

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:26 KJV

For whoever makes ugly or mars me and therefore my words, this one the Son of man will mar and make ugly when he comes in the glory of himself and of the Father and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:26 ADT

This is a quite simple turnabout. To the one who is ashamed of Christ and His words, Christ will similarly be ashamed of him at the time of and amid His great glory. Christ and His *words* are vitally linked as one essence. The *words* specifically in the context must be limited to those concerning *denying oneself, taking up his cross daily, and following me* (v. 23). As Christ cannot be considered as apart from His cross and His teaching concerning it, so Christ's disciple cannot be considered as apart from His cross and identity with the ignominy of its shame.

Jesus twice used an interesting word translated in the Authorized Version, *ashamed*. The word is epaischunomai, being a compound of the preposition epi affixed to the verb aischnomai. Epi in this kind of composition usage gives an intensive meaning, "over, beyond," to the main verb to which it is attached. The passive aischnomai is here used and means, "to be made ugly, disfigured, dishonored, tarnished." Literally

²⁹ I Corinthians 15:24-28

translated it would read, “For whoever shall be greatly dishonored and tarnished [in his own estimation and with an awareness of the eyes of others] by Me and by what I am now saying about cross bearing, would greatly dishonor and tarnish me when I am coming in My glory, and in the glory of My Father, and in the glory of the hosts of heaven.”

The Greek word has a connotation of “bringing harm to, reducing value of, disfiguring and marring one’s beauty in the sight of others.” Hence, “reducing the value of” is basic in its meaning and usage by Christ. If He and His teaching about denying oneself, taking up one’s cross daily, and following Jesus, reduces one’s value in this world with awareness of the onlookers eyes, then that one would reduce the value of Christ’s and the Father’s and the holy angels’ glory at His coming. This marring, this reduction in value, this tarnish, this disfiguring, this all is nothing more or less than shame. Shame is the primary meaning in the word—humiliation, embarrassment, mortification—shame. This shame is connected with the world’s view; it is the grief a person conceives from his own deformities considered with regard to the world taking notice of them. Christ acknowledges the distress that man has when his fellows think little of him. If that *fear of man* is greater than one’s trust in Christ, then Christ’s glory will become *a snare* brought about by such misplaced regard.³⁰

The great sin is to consider Christ’s cross, identity with that cross, and identity with a crucified life in the sight of the world, as beneath oneself. Its enormity considers dying to this world and to its possession of things, lusts, prides, and power, as so profitless and worthless of consideration that even its thought brings remorse and grief of heart. Of this Jesus says in effect, “Those who consider Me and My teaching on self-crucifixion to be beneath them, shall be surprised to find that My glory far exceeds their elevated estimation of themselves. If they think that the shamefulfulness of My lowly position and My demand to all My

³⁰ *Proverbs 20:25*

disciples to take a similarly low position is not worthy of them, then in turn My glory shall so far exceed them as to leave them behind. My glory is not just My own; it is also the glory of the Father and of His holy angels—the host of heaven. This future glory far exceeds any glory on the earth now, so as to be beyond comparison. There is no difference in My humiliation and the greatest exaltation the earth offers when compared with My glory that shall come hereafter. The world has no glory when compared with My, the Father’s, and the holy angels’ glory.”

Christ continues: “If anyone will lessen the value of My humiliation, in his estimation and in those around him, then I shall certainly lower his esteem in the next epoch, because man’s truest value and God’s original intent for man is this glory. But those who value My means to attaining this glory for man as less than their worth shall certainly never share in it. One must hold My humiliation, and My teaching for man’s humiliation, as of the highest order in order to profit from them. To limit My value in My cross bearing sacrifice is to limit one’s own share in the results of that cross bearing sacrifice.”³¹

Christ was lowly esteemed because of His death by crucifixion. Crucifixion understandably carried with it a stigma. Jesus’ experience prior to and during crucifixion was a low esteem among men. That same experience of humiliation and dishonor associated with it for Him must be accepted as a way of life for the follower of Jesus. To the disciples at that time, identification with Christ involved the terrible ignominy—shame—associated with a cross bearing. A cross branded its bearer an outlaw, an outcast, a condemned criminal, as only bound to death with no future in this world save to be put to death. Jesus calls all disciples to the same ignominy, to walk about bearing the reproach of men because they associate themselves with this condemned outcast, Jesus.

³¹ *Romans 8:17; II Timothy 2:12*

The Ultimate Rationale for Cross Bearing. While Christ's dishonor lasted only until resurrection in the eyes of believers, it lingers on in the minds of unbelievers. Presently the follower of Jesus is called to a life of continuous dishonor in the esteem of the world generally. Christ's every precept is contrary to the world's idea of greatness. To be ashamed of Christ's death to self and the sharing in that death is an absolute bypass of Christ altogether. When one's concept of Christ includes splendor, grandeur, and glory without a cross, then Christ will be ashamed of that one, which shame results in one's eternal loss of self. But when the concept of death—death to self and all the denials to self—are accepted readily as a part of Christ, then authentic discipleship results, which ends in a share in the glory bought by death.

III. THE RATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

or

THE ONLY MEANS BY WHICH WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION IS ACCOMPLISHED.

But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:27 KJV

But I am telling you a certainty [beforehand], some of the ones standing here will not in any way begin to taste for themselves [this] death [to self] until they begin to perceive and comprehend the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:27 ADT

The death referenced by Jesus in Luke's Gospel is not only or mainly physical death. The context requires it to be essentially the kind of death that has been His topic for the last four verses. He taught His disciples of His own physical death in *verse 22*, and related to that death, began in *verse 23* to speak of the death to self, or the living crucifixion, that He requires of all who would follow Him. Then in *verses 24* through *verse 26*, He explained and amplified this death to self with intelligent argument showing its necessity. Now He abruptly supplements His requirement of and His rationale behind self-death in His disciples by defining the determining factor for realizing self-death in experiential and authentic discipleship. The experience of self-death, its reality in human experience, its hard-of-accomplishment development, is wholly and absolutely dependant upon one's *seeing the kingdom of God*. Christ authoritatively asserts that *some standing here* would indeed realize this self-death because they would in fact *see the kingdom of God*.

THE POWER OF JESUS' DECLARATION*But I tell you of a truth*

The contrastive *But* has an immediate connection with the preceding subject of *verses 24 through verse 26*. There He had warned against seeking to preserve one's own choices, against living to possess material things of this world, and against being ashamed of His humiliation and His teaching of such. Finally, He closed out this warning rationale by referencing His coming in glory and its loss by those who are ashamed to be a part of His present humiliation. Against this backdrop of a coming glory of kingdom realization, now in *verse 27* He offers the possibility of seeing, perceiving, and experiencing, the kingdom now. But He still limits this sight, perception, and experience to the self-dead disciple. *But I tell you of a truth* is Jesus' way of announcing a startling and significant truth.³² Those who identify in this life with the spitting, buffeting, slapping, and blasphemy in a forgetfulness of oneself, will then, because of that affinity with His cross, experience the glory with Him.³³ But it is not until they first see the kingdom of God.

THE PARTICULAR "some" OF WHOM JESUS SPOKE*There are some standing here*

Many see in this, *some*, only the three disciples who went with Jesus up a mountain to pray, *And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray (verse 28)*. Certainly it includes these three but must not be limited to them. This *some in Luke's Gospel* refers to all authentic disciples. To help see this, one has only first to realize to whom Jesus is now speaking. His teaching concerning Who He was had been confined to His disciples. In *verse 18, he was alone with his disciples*. Again, in *verse 21, he straitly charged them* (His disciples). But beginning *verse 23, the words, And he said to them all*, indicates His turn to

³² Q.v. *Luke 12:44; 21:32*, et al.

³³ *When he shall come in his own glory, Luke 9:26*

the multitudes to include them also in His stringent requirements for following Him. His teaching up to and including this present *verse 27* includes the multitude; therefore the reference to *some* is not just restricted to the three but is understood to reference all real disciples. The *some* are those who are different and apart from the multitude, namely all authentic disciples.

THE PARTICULAR DEATH TO WHICH JESUS REFERRED
which shall not taste of death

The Taste. The phrase, *which shall not taste*, is one Greek verb preceded with a double negative, ou me, “which (who) by no means,” or literally, “who not never shall taste of death.” The verb is yeusontai, an aorist subjunctive middle voice. The aorist is an ingressive that emphasizes the start of the action, “who shall not never begin to taste death.” But the really significant grammar is the middle voice. The middle voice calls “attention to the agent as in some way clearly concerned with the action of the verb.” The subject (the *some standing here*) is participating in the action (tasting death) and the result of the action (death).³⁴ This gives emphasis to the person’s self-involvement with the *taste*. This figure of speech, *taste death*, occurs only here and in *Hebrews 2:9*, [Christ] *tasted death for every man*. This helps clarify its meaning in our text. This simile carries with it an extreme or full experience of death, just as Christ’s death was not a momentary sip but was a strong and fully substantial portion.

The Death. The middle voice with the ingressive aorist tense is remarkably noteworthy in interpreting the kind of death meant. Physical death is not usually or naturally an experience that involves any self-involvement in its precipitation or ingestion. Tasting physical death is not something that the one so tasting precipitates. The middle voice proves that the death here designated is a death to self because only it and not physical

³⁴ In accord with the middle voice as per H.E. Dana & Julius Mantley, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 157.

death requires any self-involvement. The genitive case, *of death*, denotes the idea of “sensation, and further means this and no other death.”³⁵ Together these show the death meant is this death of self as also indicated from the immediate context of Christ’s teaching. With the middle voice, the ingressive aorist, the double negative, this simile, the genitive, and the context, the truth of this statement is,

Some standing here will not begin to bring on and participate in this self-death until they perceive and understand the comprehensiveness of the kingdom of God.

The one predominate accentuation in Jesus’ words here is the absolute impossibility of any self-involvement in, and the inconceivableness of an initiation of, any denying of self, and of bearing one’s cross, and of walking behind Him on His road of self-crucifixion, until one *sees the kingdom of God*.

THE POWERFUL SIGHT OF “some”
till they see the kingdom of God

Verse 27 has been a persistent perplexity to numbers of scholars as it is variously interpreted.³⁶ Many seem to have overlooked the demands of the context³⁷ as well as the Greek grammar of the phrase, *shall not taste of death*.³⁸ Consequently, the “sight” of the kingdom of God is similarly inappropriately passed over. Since most consider the death mentioned as physical only, they naturally consider the kingdom as physical only. Hence comes the long list of possibilities of the Transfiguration,

³⁵ Robertson and his quote of Broadus, loc. cit.

³⁶ A. T. Robertson, the noted and outstanding Koine Greek and New Testament authority, wrote on *Matthew 16:28* (Matthew’s parallel to *Luke 9:27*), “Does Jesus refer to the Transfiguration, the Resurrection of Jesus, the great Day of Pentecost, the Destruction of Jerusalem, the Second Coming and Judgment? We do not know...” Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman, 1930) I, pp. 137-8.

³⁷ Q.v. under Context and Analysis, p. 75.

³⁸ Q.v. above under The Particular Death to which Jesus Referred, p. 97.

the Resurrection of Jesus, the great Day of Pentecost, the Destruction of Jerusalem, the Second Coming and Judgment, the Eternal City of the New Heaven and New Earth, and on and on. The *kingdom of God* that is seen is limited somewhat when the kind of “sight” is properly understood in the light of the context.

Luke (and Matthew and Mark) quoted Jesus with the Greek word, idosin, a third person plural aorist subjunctive from the root, hopao. This word has a dual meaning. First it means simply “to see, catch sight of, notice,” of optical perception. That is the sense to which most seem to limit this sight. Second, it means, and is widely used in the Greek New Testament as, “to recognize, understand.”³⁹ Other lexicographers render its meaning as “‘see’ with the mind, ‘perceive,’ ‘discern,’” and then list a number of examples from the Papyri⁴⁰ to show that same meaning in Jesus’ day.⁴¹ It refers to “mental vision, [and] gives prominence to the discerning mind. It especially indicates the direction of the thought to the object seen.”⁴² The first meaning of physical sight is in this Greek word, but the second sense given above is its highest meaning in this context. Certainly, Jesus means physical sight since it could not be excepted from the promises of literally seeing Him in glory, as that sight is indeed a great promise held out to Christians. However, this context demands the second meaning be its chief significance in our text.

Christ’s meaning is best realized from this Greek word’s use in the New Testament. Physical sight is in its usage, but it is not confined to that meaning. John used this word often. In *John 3:3* He told Nicodemus, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. Following these words, Jesus made clear

³⁹ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 582.

⁴⁰ The Papyri is the record of early Koine Greek documents found in ancient dumps, archeological diggings, etc.

⁴¹ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 455.

⁴² W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Westwood: Revel, 1966), p. 66.

His meaning. Nicodemus was ignorant of the comprehensive kingdom of God as he showed, saying, *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* And again, *How can these things be?* (verses 4, 9). Jesus repeatedly emphasized his ignorance in verses 10 through 12. What Jesus virtually said initially to Nicodemus in verse 3 was, *Except a man be born again from above, he cannot understand, perceive, even recognize the kingdom of God*; and followed that opening salvo with a barrage of testimony meant to correct Nicodemus' misunderstanding of the kingdom of God. Jesus showed Nicodemus and us that one must be spiritually regenerated by God's Spirit in order to perceive, understand, and attain to a true knowledge of the kingdom of God and its King.

Another example of John's use of horao, with this "understanding" concept, is *III John 11, He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God*. John makes no reference here to seeing God physically; he had already made clear that impossibility in *I John 4:12, No man hath seen God at any time*. Of course John in *III John* means, "to attain to a true knowledge of God,"⁴³ "become conscious of God".⁴⁴ His reference in the first clause of *verse 11* was to Gaius, and in this second clause to Diotrephes. John is referencing Diotrephes as never having attained to a true knowledge of and never having become conscious of God.

These uses make clear the meaning of see, horao, in our text. Jesus says, *There are some standing here who will not in any way begin to experience fully self-participation in this self-death until they perceive, understand, become conscious of, see with the mind, and attain to a true knowledge of, the kingdom of God*. All these synonymous words and phrases lie in the profound meaning of Jesus' prophetic word to the multitude in *verse 27*.

⁴³ The Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 291.

⁴⁴ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, loc. cit.

WHAT KINGDOM OF GOD?

What then does Jesus mean when conditioning this required self-death on a comprehension and understanding of the kingdom of God? Jesus here uses the term, *kingdom of God*, in its most comprehensive sense. During His ministry, the term meant to the Jews at large and even to His disciples, what might best be represented with the word and reality of a Crown. According to the world into which Jesus was born, the kingdom of God was a majestic and regal rule of God in heaven and on earth. The kingdom and the King was best represented with a Crown because the rule of God through His earthly people, the Jews, concerned the divine economy, the Providential Government, the Eternal Purpose of God for man on earth through the Jew's restoration and ascension to prominence and authority. But the kingdom of God seen comprehensively is much more than God's sovereign rule over His universe; and that failure to know the comprehensiveness of the kingdom was to what "sight" Jesus referred.

The narrow sight and perception of most men then and today is not to accept the reality of the kingdom of God as it exists for men's participation in its glories only through its redemptive sustenance provided to men. Even Christ's immediate and closest disciples were fundamentally ignorant of the kingdom of God, at least in the sense just given, and as it exists for men's participation within its glories. The true kingdom of God must include for us earthlings our own relation to God. The kingdom of God in heaven is for them, for the hosts of heaven, for cherubims and seraphims and angels, and the crowded dignitaries of heaven's rule. But include humans in the kingdom of God, include members of a fallen and depraved race of rational beings in the kingdom of God, and another aspect of, and the most important phase of, the kingdom must become prominent. It is sight of, perception of, giving prominence to, and directing the thoughts to, that facet of the *kingdom of God* on which Jesus conditioned any realized self-death.

When the kingdom of God is considered in its facet of including fallen humans, then it becomes a developing kingdom. It had a starting point when it expanded its borders to include fallen rational creatures. Its beginning as a kingdom of God for humans was at the Cross. Holiness is the outstanding essence of the King and His Kingdom. Humans are not holy, yet they can become such and can become participators in the kingdom of God through the kingdom's redemptive sustenance provided by the King, Jesus Christ. That is the sight man must perceive, understand, and give prominence to, if man is to know fully this self-death that is absolutely required by its King, Jesus Christ. To deny oneself, to take up one's cross daily, and to walk the same road to self-oblivion that Jesus walked is only possible for those who have truly given prominence to the inclusion of sinful humans into the kingdom of God via Jesus Christ's substitutionary death and resurrection.

What kingdom of God is this to which Jesus refers in His profound and awesome words, *Some standing here shall not taste of self-death until they see the kingdom of God?* Paul spoke of the Christians' kingdom of God when he wrote to the Romans, *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.*⁴⁵ This is the kingdom of God for earthlings—for fallen rational humans—because these three realities are the kingdom of God's realities that enable sinners to find entrance and to follow Jesus in self-death.

The kingdom of God for humans is **first righteousness**. This is the *righteousness* of its King Who became our Savior. His *righteousness* is the kingdom's own sustenance that provides a holiness corresponding to the King of the kingdom of heaven. This righteousness is the *righteousness of God by faith*.⁴⁶ The holy kingdom of God for the heavenly hosts is for us sinners too. We will sing at the throne with all the hosts of heaven. We are equal in holiness with all whose heavenly kingdom was before

⁴⁵ Romans 14:17 ⁴⁶ Philippians 3:9

justly shut off from us humans. A comprehension of this righteousness is obligatory if one is to obey the Savior's self-death requirement, *The One Who knew no sin, He made sin in our behalf, in order that we would become the righteousness of God in Him.*⁴⁷

Secondly, the kingdom of God for fallen humans is *peace*. When the kingdom of God was only a holy rule, its place and reality was not peace for sinners. The peace into which the kingdom has been made for us is a peace with God. Before the righteousness was ours, only hostilities to us as enemies of the King were His feelings toward us. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*⁴⁸ This peace for us humans now inhabits the kingdom of God. What a change! From war to peace with the Cross as the mediation. Peace is now the essence of the kingdom of God even for vile sinners because of His self-death that led to His physical and spiritual death on the Cross.

Thirdly, the kingdom of God is now a final and unchanging *joy*. The attributes of the King, and the character of His kingdom, brought fear and anguish from the anticipated destruction caused by His attributes' eternal effect on us. The justice of the King would bring deserved punishment; the holiness brought contempt; the love rejected and spurned threatened shame; the omnipotence forecast a shattering; the omniscience effected nakedness; the omnipresence guaranteed certainty; His immutability confirmed hopelessness. Never a relief, never a pause, and never a catching-of-breath, but only morbidity and gloom. Now the King and the kingdom of God is *joy* and eternal and hearty rejoicing; and we *joy* and *rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.*⁴⁹

The *kingdom of God* of which Jesus spoke in *Luke 9:27* is the *righteousness* of Christ imputed to us. It is a flood of *peace* from

⁴⁷ *II Corinthians 5:21 ADT* ⁴⁸ *Romans 5:1* ⁴⁹ *Romans 5:11 ASV*

having a fresh and substantiated reconciliation with its Supreme; and it is an immeasurable ensuing *joy* in the Holy Spirit as God's supreme joy is created in and shared with us. How does this and why does this by necessity precede any self-death in followers behind Jesus? Members of the fallen human race have no power of their own to do any good. But when they perceive such *righteousness, peace, and joy* is possible through Jesus' own death to self and His crucifixion, then is a devotion to Him and to His Words a compelling force. Except they first comprehend, perceive, and give prominence to what the kingdom of God has become and thus really is through Jesus' Cross, humans never treasure a wholehearted devotion to Christ. The kingdom of God when fully taken to heart in its genuine comprehensiveness embodies the Cross particularly. The kingdom of God became something entirely distinct to Peter, James, and John, and to all the disciples, after the Cross. What was lacking in them all—a real self-death—became a reality for them all only when they “saw” the kingdom of God from the new perspective of the Cross.

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

There is a uniqueness to each Gospel because each Gospel writer has a specific emphasis. Matthew emphasizes the Kingly Christ; Mark, the Serving Lord; Luke, the Manly Jesus; and John, the Divine Son of God. Only the three synoptic Gospels have the incident and teaching of our text, thereby limiting our references to them. Notice this teaching in *Luke 9:27* with its parallels in Matthew and Mark, noting the underlined portions,

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.
Matthew 16:28

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.
Mark 9:1

But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.
Luke 9:27

As we consider the several emphases of these three Gospels, we will understand each of the three's reference to Jesus' words concerning what is *seen* and what is involved in the *seeing*.

Matthew's Peculiarity: The Presence (Coming) of the Christ. In Matthew, since the King's presence and His Kingdom are the emphasis, the sight promised that precedes and results in this death to self is *the Son of Man coming in his kingdom*. Matthew emphasizes the coming of the King at His second coming and His one thousand year reign on earth. Matthew sees the ultimate experience for his readers, the Jews, as the Jewish Kingdom on earth with their Messiah in regal power and authority. Indeed, that will only happen when the nation as a whole does truly finally die to their self-ideas of fleshly materialism as concerns their Messiah's reign.⁵⁰ The connection is to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant's promise of a kingdom wherein all Gentiles are blessed through the Seed of Abraham, the Christ.⁵¹

But Matthew's meaning must not be confined to a future view of the Kingdom. Matthew's practical point in his Gospel is that the Kingdom is here now in the King Jesus. The message of John the Baptist was *Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matthew 3:2). In fact, the whole of Matthew's immediate purpose in his Gospel is to convince his Jewish brethren that this Jesus is presently the Messiah, and His Kingdom is now reigning on earth in individual subjects.⁵² Consequently, Matthew's words in 16:28, *till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom*, must

⁵⁰ *Romans 11:25-27; Matthew 23:30*

⁵¹ *Genesis 12:3*, which promise had an immediate fulfillment to those Gentiles who had contact with Abraham; an intermediate fulfillment in the Gospel of the Grace of God today, *Galatians 3:8*; and an ultimate fulfillment in the coming reign of the Jew's Messiah on earth, *Isaiah 60:1-22*.

⁵² Thus is the whole Sermon on the Mount, i.e. the King's reign on earth today is of what the Sermon instructs. E.g. the Sermon is the Kingdom's designs and

be interpreted as also referencing Christ's reign in men's hearts, His coming in His kingdom's authority and power into men's lives as King of individual Egos and Ids and psyches. Matthew's emphasis is to Christ's ruling power in individuals as a personal King, hence the reference to *seeing* [perceiving] *the Son of man coming into his kingdom*. That perceptive insight of Christ's personal coming in Presence as King into individual subjects is equivalent to Luke's reference to perceiving the kingdom of God.

Mark's Peculiarity: The Power of the Christ. In Mark, since the serving, doing, and accomplishing Savior is the emphasis, the sight promised that precedes and results in this death to self is *the kingdom of God come with power*. Mark emphasizes the power, i.e. the ability, the faculty to perform and to accomplish. The Greek word is dunamis, "ability, endowment, competency." The perceptive insight is the kingdom of God coming with ability, endowment, and a competency to do what? When one perceives the competency of the kingdom of God coming to inadequate and fallen creatures, it results in a self-death. Of course the competency of the kingdom of God for fallen and debilitated men is the Cross, and everything connected to and resulting from the Cross—the redeeming sacrifice of Christ for debilitated, unendowed, and incompetent humans. Mark emphasized the ability of the kingdom to do in mankind what was without the Cross impossible. The power of the Cross⁵³ creates in men a wholehearted devotion to Christ that will lead men to die to self, to live a self-death, to experience a living crucifixion, in favor of the King's program and the Kingdom of God's agenda.

[cont.] designs and intentions in the lives of men on earth today, during His reign from heaven, from whence comes the phrase, *the kingdom of heaven*, that is quite distinct from and in some ways nearly in antithesis to the phrase, *the kingdom of God*.

⁵³ *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, I Corinthians 1:18, 23, 24.*

Luke's Peculiarity: The Perception of Christ's Death. In Luke, since a Man's teaching and rational subjectivity are the emphases, the sight promised that precedes and results in this self-death is *the kingdom of God*. Luke, distinct from both Matthew and Mark, emphasizes the instructive intellect and rational wisdom of this unique Man, Jesus Christ. Since his proximate readers were Greeks who themselves were intellectuals and the intelligentsia of the world, Luke made his Gospel appeal to, and articulated clearly, what the mind saw in this unequalled Person, Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God when understood in its altogether rational consideration must have as its basis the complete mental acumen and wisdom of its redemptive provision for imperfect men. The kingdom of God when understood fully and completely, has to have prominent the humiliation, cross, and substitutionary work of this perfect and submissive Man, Jesus Christ. Hence Luke's emphasis of the perception in this incident. All the Synoptics relate the later transfiguration of Jesus, but Luke alone reveals the subject of Christ's and Moses' and Elijah's conversation being the *exodus* (earthly departure, death) of Christ. This fits perfectly with Luke's emphatic reference in *verse 27* to a perception of the kingdom of God that must include the Cross as well as the Presence and the Power of the King.

IV. THE REMARKABLE WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION OF JESUS— AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST'S DEATH TO SELF

⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

⁵² *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.*

⁵³ *And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

⁵⁴ *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?*

⁵⁵ *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

⁵⁶ *For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

Luke 9:51-56

THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51

The Reality of Glory. This verse begins Christ's last six months of ministry before the cross at Jerusalem. Just past was the transfiguration of Christ when Moses and Elijah had appeared with Him speaking to Him of His *decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem* (Luke 9:31). At that transfiguration Christ's countenance was *altered* and became *white and glistening*. This denoted His perfection as a Man. This

was the ultimate glorification and authentication of His perfect Manhood by God, thus confirming His adequacy as the sacrifice for man. Only this perfect, glorious, and divine Man was a suitable sacrifice for Calvary's substitutionary redemption for sinners. That transfiguration was the reality of glory to Christ, and is the confirmation of God's acceptance of His *decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem* for sin. "Our Lord came to the natural ending, that is, the consummation of His sinless life, upon the Mount. If He had no mission in this world other than that of living a perfect human life, and revealing to humanity a perfect ideal, He never need have come back from the Mount. There He was metamorphosed, and the time of His assumption was come",⁵⁴

But, Jesus was not received up at the culmination of His perfect and ideal life as a Man on the Mount of Transfiguration. Instead, after speaking of His *decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem*, He descended the holy mount of transfiguration in order to accomplish His greater work of redemption at Calvary. Instead of being received up while glorified before Peter, James, and John upon the Mount, He was to be received up in accord with His time as the Savior—at Jerusalem after Calvary's shame, humiliation, and suffering. Instead of ascending up into glory from the mount of transfiguration, He ascended up from the mount of Calvary, so to speak. In other words, He went into glory only from the shame of the cross, and not from the recognition of the transfiguration. The crown came only from the cross and could not in any way avoid it. Christ had six months of ministry before His ascension would occur, but during those six months, it was the beauty and joy of His rightful place in glory, which began to be fastened in His mind. Yet, His glory as the Savior of fallen men had to come by way of Jerusalem. As the writer of Hebrews put it, *Who for the joy that was set*

⁵⁴ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1929), p. 129.

before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.⁵⁵ Jesus began to think more and more of His return to the Father and to the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17:5). That glory became more and more relevant to Jesus. It was what He desired very greatly. As God He would have great need to be with the Father perfectly. While on earth, His confinement to an earthly body and to the sinful environment of the world was a trial and difficulty for Him. As the cross approached, He anticipated glory and joy, desiring to be there in heaven with the Father. As Calvary and the cross approached, the glory became more of a reality to Him. The reality of His place in the Godhead was the inspiration of His life, and was also the inspiration of His death.

The Reality of Jerusalem. Because the time *that he was to be received up* was to be after Calvary, Jesus *stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*. This was the final journey to the place of His crucifixion. What occurs in Luke's account up until 19:27 tells of His last journey up to Jerusalem and to crucifixion, though all does not appear in chronological order and there are excerpts from other times inserted by Luke for teaching affect. Jesus understood that this was His final trip to Jerusalem. He warned His disciples repeatedly of what would happen there,⁵⁶ but still He *stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*, and to certain death. *Stedfastly* speaks of wholehearted devotion to the experience awaiting Him at Jerusalem. Jesus saw the glory, and had just experienced a foretaste of the glory on the Mount, but He knew that the final glory would come only through Jerusalem. It was the Father's will that His glory should come by means of the sufferings, shame, and sorrows awaiting Him at Jerusalem. With wholehearted devotion to ,and with consummate awareness of, His experiences on the cross, *He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*.

⁵⁵ *Hebrews 12:2*, i.e. thinking lightly of the shame in comparison with the glory which should follow, cp. *Romans 8:18*.

⁵⁶ *Luke 9:44; Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 34*

“For ever let us bless God that we have such a ready and willing Savior.”⁵⁷ This was His attitude. This was always His devotion. This was His heartfelt dedication to the giving up of His life, that He might save ours. This was the spirit of Jesus, namely, to lose His life that it might be saved. He gave up His life that it might be profitable for the Kingdom’s good. For Jesus, the Kingdom’s good was the experience at Jerusalem on the cross by which He would save many lives for the Kingdom. This is the reality of Jesus’ wholehearted devotion: *He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem* though He knew fully what awaited Him there.

THE RESULT OF CHRIST’S DEATH TO SELF—HIS DISPOSITION
OF WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?

But he turned, and rebuked them, [and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.]⁵⁸ And they went to another village.

Luke 9:52-56

⁵⁷ John Charles Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Luke I (All Saints’ Passage Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1976), p. 332.

⁵⁸ That enclosed in brackets is not considered a part of the original Greek text by considerable authority and Authorities. However, their truth does fit well the context and the reality of Jesus’ devotion to the Cross.

The Rejected Christ, 9:52-53. Jesus sent certain messengers from the number of His disciples into each village ahead of Himself in order to make arrangements for housing and food for His party, and for ministry to the people there, as was necessary. However, when these messengers entered into a town of the Samaritans, they would not welcome him, nor would they allow any accommodations be made available to his party *because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

The Samaritans were a mixed race; therefore the Jews had properly refused their help in rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Further hostilities fermented sometime later when one of the Maccabean Jews destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells of Samaritans actually murdering travelers who were attempting to go up to Jerusalem to worship there. It was because of this type of long-standing and bitter hostility between the Jews and Samaritans that they refused to receive Jesus and His disciples. Since they were traveling to Jerusalem, these Samaritans refused to recognize Him as legitimate. They rejected His authority simply because He acknowledged Jerusalem's authority.

An Avenged Christ? 9:54. James and John were brothers named the *Sons of Thunder* by Jesus, perhaps partly because of this reaction by them on this occasion.⁶⁰ They had recently been with Jesus as He was transfigured when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. He had talked with them; therefore, in accord with the "spirit" of both Moses in his early life, and with Elijah in his entire ministry, James and John thought to react as did the prophets of former days.⁶¹ *Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?* was their inquiry. That kind of *spirit* or attitude was just what temperament they perceived the Messiah ought to have. To them such an insult was inexcusable and deserving of a quick and final response. However, Jesus was controlled by another quality, namely, the spirit of the cross awaiting Him at Jerusalem.

⁵⁹ II Kings 17:24-41; Ezra 4:1-3 ⁶⁰ Mark 3:17

⁶¹ Exodus 2:11-15; II Kings 1:9-16

The Disposition of Christ, 9:55-56. Jesus rebuked James and John and voided the entirely uncharacteristic spirit that had grasped them. It was because Jesus' face was *stedfastly set to go to Jerusalem* that He could not allow such an inappropriate attitude to remain in His disciples. Jesus' whole life was for the saving of men's lives; therefore He could not counter its purpose by tolerating in His disciples such a challenge to His main ideal. Jesus came to *save*. Notice that there is no *them* in the original; it was added by the translators, *but to save them*, as shown by the italics. It should not have been added because it suggests just the opposite of what He already has taught in *verses 24 and 25*. Jesus came to *save* period, to *save* for the Kingdom, to *save* for eternity, to *save* for spiritual verities, and for spiritual values, and for His own mission of the cross at Jerusalem. He did not come to save men's physical lives, but to cause men to lose themselves in His work of the cross, and for the gospel's sake. That very loss is the saving of the life according to Jesus. Jesus is saying in effect, *I came not to destroy men's lives physically, but to save men's lives for the real values of God's important work, the same work which is awaiting Me at Jerusalem. That is My mission.* That is why He had said in prophetic utterance:

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

Isaiah 50:6-7

The dominating spirit or attitude of Jesus toward men was that their lives might be saved for good, for righteousness, for eternal things, for heaven's work of spreading the gospel. His disciples must maintain that attitude if they truly are to represent Him in the earth; therefore to avoid any display of confusion and controversy, *they went to another village.*

The result, or effect, of Christ's wholehearted devotion to saving men's lives through the cross was exhibited in this incident. His wholehearted devotion to saving men's real worth

for good rather than destroying them because of their evil was the controlling determinant of Jesus' whole life. Christ would have all His disciples not condemn the evil in others so much as to commend the possible good. This attitude of Jesus prompts Him to save men's lives by pointing them to the good, yet attainable, goal of Kingdom service.

This wholehearted devotion to benefit men was Christ's reason for not calling fire down to destroy these Samaritans who attempted to hinder His reaching Jerusalem and the cross. This spirit or attitude of Jesus constrains us disciples to have patience, longsuffering, and love toward the lost, who, while being sought by us, are, as these Samaritans were, actually hindering our work for their good. The wholehearted devotion of Jesus never deviated from His mission at Jerusalem with the cross. He continued in loving devotion even toward these Samaritans who failed to understand that Jerusalem was the actual means of saving their own lives for the Kingdom.

This was the passion of His life: patience and longsuffering at the hands of ignorant men. They ironically refused to receive Him because He was seeking to preserve them by going up to Jerusalem to death. His consecration to do the will of Him Who sent Him was the offence that these Samaritans despised about Him, yet He modestly *went to another village*. That is the spirit of Jesus. That is the attitude of a saved life for the Kingdom. That is the wholehearted devotion of Jesus to the Kingdom in spite of men's arrogant and evil opposition to His work among them. That spirit is similarly required from us today.

V. THE REFUSAL OF WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION FROM THREE UNAUTHENTIC DISCIPLES

⁵⁷*And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

⁵⁸*And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

⁵⁹*And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

⁶⁰*Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

⁶¹*And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

⁶²*And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

Luke 9:57-62

Luke follows the incident of Christ's longsuffering and patient spirit toward this Samaritan opposition to His work with an account of three would-be or supposed disciples. Each came to Jesus or was called by Jesus to show the opposite devotion that Jesus exhibited in the previous account. All three of these prospective followers of Jesus are discouraged from following Jesus by Jesus, because they without exception displayed a lack of enthusiasm and zeal for His work. None demonstrated any intensity for His work, or displayed the wholehearted devotion that Christ possessed as just seen in the previously recorded incident with the Samaritans. Christ will require of these three the same attitude or spirit which He Himself possessed, if they are to be true disciples. Nothing has changed since those days. Jesus still requires this same devotion from all His disciples. If anyone would become a disciple, or if anyone supposes himself a

disciple, as these evidently did, one must be wholeheartedly devoted to Christ's preferences for one's life as Christ was to His Father's preferences for His life. He asks of His disciples nothing more or less than what He Himself gave.

This section consists of six verses; each would-be or supposed disciple received two verses. In each man Christ means to show to us how we are to manifest the spirit of wholehearted devotion to him and to His Kingdom which He Himself possessed and exhibited. Only as we live as He teaches in these verses will we be able to save men's lives instead of destroying them. A disciple's true worth to Him and to His Kingdom is determined by his living the same spirit of Christ as Jesus required from these three would-be disciples.

CLASSIC SUPPOSED DISCIPLESHIP

In this scenario there are the three typical kinds of imagined discipleship. Each is soundly rebuked and denied by Jesus, either by what is said, or by what is left unsaid. The rebuke is necessary in each case because Jesus desires no half-hearted disciples. There can be no holding back certain areas of one's life. Nothing is more sacred than Jesus Christ and His work. No time is more valuably spent than that spent for Christ; no effort could be better put to use; no monies could be more wisely invested. Therefore, He requires all disciples to give all. He knows also that His work would suffer loss if fake or mistaken disciples were allowed to allege to be His disciples uncontested. If Christ would allow that kind of discipleship, then all observers would fail to see any importance in Christ or His work. If His followers care not, then the world would reason: "There could not be much to this Christianity thing. Those who are His followers are not convinced; therefore it all is worthless."

Throughout the years since Christ's ascension until His coming again, there will be multitudes of these kinds of imitation disciples. Many envision themselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ while a stranger to His requirements for real

discipleship. This is not dealing with “degrees” of factual discipleship, where one is saved but not yet a committed disciple. But Jesus deals here with actual discipleship—salvation and relationship to Christ. Again, it is only the sold-out disciple who is unashamedly losing his life in this world who will save it for the next. Hear again Jesus’ plain teaching on this very important certainty.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away;

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:23-26

In this teaching Christ equates sold-out discipleship with loosing one’s soul when He warned of loosing one’s *life* and in danger of being *cast away*. Also, it is no small matter for Christ to be *ashamed* of any man; that is a very perilous and menacing condition. These words from the loving and caring Son of God make clear Christ’s abhorrence of hypocrisy and half-heartedness. He will have none of it.⁶²

Only the person prepared for Christ through the Holy Spirit, prepared by the truth of the gospel, and prepared for freedom from the guilt of sin, will wholeheartedly submit to Christ’s will and way for his life.⁶³ No requirement will be too costly. No demand by the Savior will seem too severe. No expectation

⁶² Q.v. Revelation 3:15-16; Luke 14:25-27, 33.

⁶³ John 6:44; II Corinthians 4:5-6; John 5:24; Romans 5:1, respectively.

from the Possessor of scarred hands and feet and side will be overly burdensome for the true disciple.⁶⁴ All will be forsaken for Christ, as He requires this from each disciple. Yet not all the same things are required from all disciples, but they have this one thing in common: What He requires from each in their respective lives they will give if they are true disciples. This kind of true repentance and submission is real in all who are truly saved disciples, who have been brought to the Savior by God's prompting and not by man's. Only a supernatural experience will transport rebellious men into this kind of real discipleship. It is called elsewhere in the Scriptures, being born again.

Moreover, these three men were called differently.⁶⁵ The first came of his own accord. He approached Jesus and volunteered his services. The second was commanded to *follow me*. He was not given a choice; no alternatives were offered or included in Jesus' call of this prospective disciple. The last of these three seems to have heard the first two and offered his services with what he felt was an unassuming request. He wanted to say goodbye to the members of his household. Though different in each calling, in all three Christ demanded absolute obedience. No qualification was allowed for any of the three—no large qualification such as one's house or small one such as just saying goodbye. Nothing but unreserved submission attains true discipleship and spiritual relationship with Jesus.

Again, these three reveal another aspect of authentic

⁶⁴ *1 John 5:3*

⁶⁵ In Scripture there are two fundamental kinds of callings. They are external and internal, or physical and spiritual, or unto opportunity only and unto salvation, or ineffectual and effectual. The physical calling is made by men in preaching the gospel, while the spiritual calling is made by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. Obviously these three would-be and supposed disciples were called by Christ, or by hearing, externally, physically, unto opportunity only, and hence not effectually. See these two kinds of callings explained further in Volume I, Authentic Narrow Discipleship, under headings, TWO GROUPS, and The Many, pp. 41-42, & fn.

discipleship. It is this: **Fleshly desire** to be a disciple does not bring salvation and real discipleship. In each of the three there was a desire. In the first, the aspiration was great enough to have led him to volunteer to become a disciple who would follow Him whithersoever. In the second, he did at least say, *Lord, suffer me first...* The third man volunteered with only the modest request to say goodbye to his household. But Jesus is teaching that wishing for true discipleship and obtaining true discipleship are entirely differing, and sometimes opposing, happenings. Multitudes enter into a wide-gate Jesus, desiring in the flesh to be a disciple after hearing only an external call from men. They reason that this will bring them happiness, or peace, or security, physical healing, or safety from hell, or one of a thousand other blessings. They estimate that their own brand of discipleship is to be preferred over other modes of living, but they reserve something for themselves. They never have really given all themselves and all their sin to Jesus. They really do aspire to discipleship. They long to have the ideal peace with God that true discipleship will indeed bring, but they never submit to Jesus' Lordship over their lives. They hold back in certain areas, and fail to consider that all their sinful wills must be taken to the cross, and left there.

Another area of classic supposed discipleship is observable here. It is the problem of **impulsiveness**. None of these three had really given sufficient thought what discipleship to Jesus really involved. The first who thought to follow Jesus *whithersoever thou goest* never considered the loss of his house and lands. When he first heard Jesus he rashly and instinctively blurted out, *I will follow you whithersoever*, but Jesus cooled his heated spontaneity with His reply. The second would-be follower in a similarly unthinking fashion thought his other duties to his father were of more importance than those to the Christ. His impulsiveness was to count at once and without proper consideration that the proprieties concerning his father's final funeral were of more importance than

was Jesus' calling. He gave no consideration to his improprieties to the Lord Jesus Christ—that he would put off the King of the entire universe in favor of a burial service, and one for a lost man at that. Surely, he would not have attempted to stonewall God if he had just considered...would he? The third supposed disciple felt an impulsive and somewhat capricious need for good-byes that outweighed Christ's commanded obedience to follow Him immediately. In whatever area or in whatever way, impulsiveness in responding to Christ is severely rebuked in our text. One must consider carefully what discipleship really is before verbally committing oneself to Christ as His disciple.

THE NOWHERE DISCIPLE

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
Luke 9:57-58

This man tendered himself as a disciple at the disposal of Jesus Christ. He volunteered himself to follow Jesus anywhere, but Jesus challenged his yieldedness by asking him in effect, *You claim to be willing to follow Me anywhere, but are you willing to follow Me nowhere, to do without the material comforts of life if required?* Seemingly, this man desired to be known as Christ's disciple, but he volunteered too much to Christ for his own liking. Not that any could give up too much to Christ really, but that he gave more to Christ than he had considered would be involved in following Christ *whithersoever thou goest*. True discipleship involves honesty in surrender. When we surrender anything to Christ, **He takes it just as it is offered to Him**. What we say, we shall do; it will be required of us. It is a precise, accurate, and true stipulation with which we shall be confronted when Jesus responds to our volunteered surrender.

This supposed disciple offered to follow Jesus anywhere; therefore Jesus called to his attention that he would be going nowhere at all in this world. No hole, which is really nothing at all, no nest, which is nothing more than trashy grass and weeds used for a season, will be provided His true disciples. Jesus is saying that no place in this world system can or will be held onto by any who come to Him for discipleship. Owning a home is not an evil, except as its ownership interferes with His calling to discipleship. But the broader scope of Christ's teaching here is to give up ownership of any thing in this world when He considers it necessary in order to serve Him. Real discipleship places all on the altar of love, and surrenders even a place to lay one's head if this is what the Lord requires. To follow Jesus *whithersoever* is to have nothing between oneself and Jesus; only Jesus is in front of the real disciple.

This means for all present day disciples that no posture in this world can take priority or precedence over Christ and following Him in all areas of life. No houses, lands, circumstances, jobs, or any other of the things considered important in this life—none of them—are as important as following Christ. But one comes back, “But my family needs a place to live; therefore I must work on Sundays. I place their welfare as my priority.” But Jesus says, “No, follow me first, and all these things will be added unto you.” Our decision every time must be Christ first, house or home or posture or job second after Christ. That only is true discipleship.

THE WHITHERSOEVER DISCIPLE.

Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

Luke 9:57

Jesus is the “Whithersoever Savior.” That is, whatever the personal cost, He would place God's will first *whithersoever* it led Him, even to Jerusalem. No anchorage in this world would impede his progress to Jerusalem. These words of Jesus should not cause us sorrow, *But the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* He spoke these words with great joy because He had

nothing in this world to hinder His progress to Jerusalem and to fulfillment of God's purpose for His life. He would have us all to allow no roots in this world to prevent our own progress with our own crosses. Wholehearted devotion rejoices in detachment from the world and from the hindering forces of the world which would prevent progress towards God's ultimate use of and place for us in His Kingdom. The whithersoever disciple is like his Whithersoever Savior. He is unimpeded by this world's property or roots or values. He will have the same freedom and joy which the Whithersoever Savior enjoyed. Jesus teaches that only the same kind of whithersoever that He practiced meets wholeheartedly with His approval, and only that kind of disciple possesses the same wholehearted devotion to His Kingdom as He.

THE ME-FIRST DISCIPLE

And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:59-60

This second would-be or supposed disciple of Jesus Christ qualified his imagined discipleship with a *me first*. Oh, how common is this! *Lord, allow me first*. Jesus will not allow anyone first ahead of His will, because only His will is a perfect will. It is God's will. The cross is the "first" which God's will ordained as Christ's number one priority; it even took first-place rights over Jesus Himself at Jerusalem.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross

Philippians 2:6-8

Since the cross is so important to Him, Christ will not allow anyone to put any thing—even one’s own self—ahead of His work of redemption. He did not and He will not allow any true disciple to say, *Allow me first*. It will not work, because the most important “first” in the entire universe is the cross. It is first. Many of these kinds of supposed disciples come to Jesus with an *Allow me first*, and they live their lives with a *suffer me first* constancy. That is not real discipleship or devotion or salvation. No! Christ allows no disciple to live out an attitude that says, “Allow me first ahead of the work of the cross. I have important things to do, places to go, money to spend, and people to see. I’ll be your disciple, but allow my important things to be first.” That is only a supposed discipleship because it views the cross as secondary.

Lord, suffer me first were the words and attitude that marked the beginnings of sin. It was when Lucifer said, *Lord, suffer me first* that sin was created in his heart.⁶⁶ In the Garden of Eden it was when Eve said, *Lord, suffer me first* that she fell and led Adam to fall into the trap of the *suffer me first* pit. The whole human race is born into a world of *suffer me first* greed and fleshly perversion. The sound echoing out of hell is the ringing clarion call of all sinners, *Suffer me first*. Adam’s *Lord, suffer me first* brought sin and suffering and death to all men, who likewise are born from the womb crying, *Lord, suffer me first*.⁶⁷ Christ will not allow anyone first. As He put the cross first, so also must every disciple. The *suffer me first* disciple is not a disciple at all. He is only a false professor, a hypocrite, who says always, again and again, *Lord, suffer me first*. He says to the Preacher:

“Pastor, suffer me first to go see my loved ones. Suffer me first to spend my money on the me-first things of this world. Suffer me first to go to this or that world’s events, to the ‘Me first’ events, not to Jesus’ boring and not so important work of the cross. Preacher, suffer me first, with Jesus somewhere down in my following priorities. Oh, He is with me. He’s down there in the trailing pack behind

⁶⁶ *Isaiah 14:12-14* ⁶⁷ *Psalms 58:3; 51:5*

the really important things of my ‘allow me first’ preferences. But Preacher, I know Him and He is my Savior and Lord. It’s just that I have to do the especially important things first. Preacher, suffer me first.”

Jesus’ response is to them as in our text, *Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God*. It is not acceptable to say, *Lord, suffer me first*, no matter what the *first* is, unless it is the support of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That preaching is the only *first* according to Jesus.

FAMILY-FIRST DISCIPLESHIP

Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Luke 9:59

This man was a “disciple by conjecture.” He had what he thought was a good scriptural “me-first” in his family and their needs. He said, *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father*. This man chose what to him was the best of reasons for making Christ and His cause subordinate; it was his responsibilities to his parents. The Law of Moses required that one’s parents be honored above all others.

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Exodus 20:12

Many imitation disciples hold this commandment in more reverence than they do Jesus’ commandments. They believe that family is more important than Christ’s work. They, like this would-be disciple, think that *burying* one’s father is more pressing than following and obeying Jesus Christ’s directives. Amazing! For this man, his present circumstance required an immediate burial of his father, which was at that time the most important thing in his life.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ The Author is aware of the interpretation that to *bury* one’s father means “caring for” until death. But upon careful study of the original, we decide against it as a viable possibility, which interpretation is not alone.

The Jews held in high reverence the burial of the dead, especially members of one's family and certainly one's parents, particularly in view of the Fifth Commandment as quoted above. Therefore, this man requested a delay of his own discipleship until he could carry out his legitimate concerns and obligations toward his father's burial. How better could he obey the Fifth Commandment of God's Holy Law than to bury him properly and respectfully?⁶⁹ But no! Jesus says to *Let the spiritual dead bury their physical dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.* Family takes a very inferior second place behind Christ's Word of Commandment.

Jesus' First Commandment takes priority over Moses' Fifth Commandment and all the rest of those dealing with love to man (the Fifth through the Tenth Commandments).⁷⁰ Family is to be put behind Christ's commandments as to priority and as to obedience. Nothing takes precedence over Christ's authority in a true disciple. When His Word comes, His sheep hear and follow. There can be no flimsy excuses about family substituting for real discipleship. Family is second to Christ's Kingdom, then, now, and forever. "The fact that Jesus is sovereign Lord, and that following him means doing whatever he commands without any qualification, condition, or reservation, must be deeply impressed upon the mind and heart of this man."⁷¹ Therefore, Jesus told him, *Let the [spiritual] dead bury their [physical] dead: but you go and preach the kingdom of God.*

⁶⁹ See *Mark 7:9-13* for this same kind of pseudo-dedication to godliness in order to circumvent the weightier spirit of God's commandment concerning honoring father and mother. The Pharisees were guilty of this in order to have their own priorities uppermost. A similar kind of discrimination and inequity is involved with the misplaced sentimentalism of this family-first disciple.

⁷⁰ Christ's commandments could never conflict with or contradict any of the Ten Commandments, especially the First through the Fourth Commandments dealing with man's love toward God. But the Fifth through Tenth, dealing with man's love toward man, are easily confused, and oftentimes mischievously used, to appear sometimes to be in conflict with Jesus.

⁷¹ Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 562.

Jesus would have all His disciples learn this: **The ties pertaining to earthy family life are superseded by the church's ministry and by the ties of Christian service and love; and no family relationship shall ever equal the relationship of His disciples one to another and to Him.** Nothing is as important as maintaining fellowship with Him and with His people. Family must never come first.

Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Luke 8:19-21

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:26

The family is in another realm from the work of the Kingdom. These are two greatly differing domains. The one is the sphere of the spiritual dead and the other is the sphere of the spiritual living. All mere fleshly attachments are to be forgotten if they conflict in any way with the new and eternal relations in Christ's Kingdom,

Consequently, from now on we estimate and regard no one from a [purely] human point of view—in terms of natural standards of value.⁷²

I Corinthians 5:16a

Hate is what is comparable to the emotions and feelings toward fleshly relationships when compared with spiritual relationships. Only fleshly hate is antithetically analogous to the

⁷² The Amplified Bible, The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), p. 276.

contrastive passion of great spiritual love that the true disciple has for Christ. For all authentic disciples Christ requires a break with the priorities of all former fleshly relationships .

THE LONG GOODBYE

And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:61-62

This third speculative follower of Jesus must have heard the previous two. He saw the voluntary approach of number one, and heard the attempted *Lord, suffer me first* of number two. Now he comes voluntarily with only one unpretentious request, *Let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house*. This is another, *Me first*, but here he attempts, or would seek, to do what seems at first a reasonable thing. It was similar to Elijah's call for Elisha to follow him, prompting Elisha to return home in order to cook the oxen with the fire of their yokes for a farewell dinner for his family.⁷³ However, there is a prominent distinction. Elisha returned to destroy what his former livelihood used in order to make a clean break with his past; and he was celebrating his call to the ministry at the same time. But this third supposed disciple desires to return for a different reason. He wants *to bid them farewell, which are at home in my house*. That has a connotation of a prolonged farewell. The reference to plowing by Jesus in response to his request suggests that both the aspirant and Jesus were thinking of Elisha's calling by Elijah. Jesus sees in this man, not a desire to return home to destroy old ties or to burn yokes or to kill oxen, not a return to celebrate his new life in Christ and his service. But instead, He sees a prolonged ordeal of heart-wrenching sympathy from family members for the coming separation. Christ saw in this farewell what would become a prolonged series of good-byes, which would never end in real

⁷³ *II Kings 10:10-21*

decisive change in this man's life. His desire to *bid them farewell* was simply a revelation of an unwillingness to follow Jesus devotedly and unhesitatingly.

How many supposed disciples of Jesus has this author seen just like this third man! They hear Jesus' call and begin living the rest of their lives bidding farewell to old friends, old ways, old habits, old life-styles. They never finish with them. After one year, five years, twenty years, they still are saying goodbye to them all. It is indeed a long goodbye. They never leave the old and follow Jesus in the new. They had to return to bid farewell to the old ways, but are still engaged in the good-byes. Jesus requires absolute and whole obedience. There can be no tarrying. "The inquirer is either not to follow, or to follow wholly and perfectly."⁷⁴

STEADFAST DEVOTION

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:62

Jesus used a common and well-known problem of plowing in ancient times. The plows of Jesus' day were light and easily overturned or misguided. They necessitated absolute and total concentration, else the crop or planned crop was certain to be ruined. This is not referring just to fallow or unplowed ground, but also to the cultivation of a planted field. One look back or away meant the ruin of precious seed, or of small plants, or perhaps the near ripe grain. One had to concentrate wholly upon the work at hand if one was to plow to profit the field.

Jesus used that picture to signify true discipleship. It requires diligence, attentiveness, intensity, and a persistent focus, if real profit for the Kingdom is to be realized. Christ requires of His

⁷⁴ John Peter Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Luke-Mark (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p.163.

disciples concentration upon Him and upon His Kingdom. There must be focused effort if one is truly a disciple. There can be no looking back or looking aside. There can be no worrying about houses, or father, or family, or good-byes to the old ways and folks. The new requires perfect devotion and a wholeheartedness as exhibited by Jesus Himself.

He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem began this section; *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God* ends it. They are connected in thought. Jesus had put his hand to a plow, which was His cross at Jerusalem. All His efforts were to converge upon that climax whereby He would enter into His glory as Savior and Lord of all. Jesus was worthy of the Kingdom because he never looked back but gave His entire attention to Calvary. Even so, the man or woman, boy or girl, who comes to Jesus to become His disciple is similarly required to keep steadfastly at the plow, giving concentrated efforts to his calling. No man will enter the Kingdom who is not wholeheartedly *fit* for its requirements concerning devotion to its work at Calvary. That is the work of the King's plowmen; it is their all, as it was Jesus' all.

PROHIBITED DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus discourages false discipleship; He actually prohibits it in our text and elsewhere in the Gospels. The testimony of one's life is what tells the world Who and how Jesus is. To identify with Him but not to submit to His requirements for discipleship is a contradiction of life. To those supposed disciples who halfway follow Jesus, and who never fulfill what they claim with their mouths, Jesus says,

Go away. If you even hesitate at putting Me first, do not even attempt to follow Me and claim at the same time to be My disciple. You bring reproach upon me and hinder my cause. You are not fit for the kingdom of God, because you are not born again.

Jesus gave no positions of authority or duty to any one of these three men, because none were really committed to Him. A place of authority will not make a person a true disciple. If love for Jesus and what He did at Jerusalem fails to win one to true wholehearted devotion, then no amount of responsibility will do it either. Jesus actually turned away these three from following Him. He reasoned: “Better for Me, for My Kingdom, for My service, for these and their lives and for all observers of them, if they have no duty. Their halfway service will say to all who know their lives: ‘This Jesus Christ is not worthy of my best, my devotion, my commitment, and my efforts. He just gets my leftovers and none of my firsts.’ My Kingdom cannot have such inconsistent followers lest it fail of its grand goals.”

The world has its roster, and counts up its apostates—the backsliders, the wanderers, and the unfaithful professors of Jesus Christ. It is a serious blow struck at the crown and the glory of Christ when the world can say, “Such and such a man bears the name of Christ. He attends such and such church, but he is here among us much of the time. He never puts Christ and His church first; therefore that church and that Christ are not worth much either. I will have nothing to do with either that church or that Christ.” Christ Jesus is wise not to encourage such false discipleship with its half-hearted service. It is all or nothing according to Jesus. His true sheep hear His voice in this teaching and they follow Him. May our devotion to him and to His cause be such that men see our wholehearted devotion and seek to know the One to Whom we show such faithfulness. Amen!

THE PROTOTYPE OF FALSE DISCIPLESHIP

In the early fifties when I was in Jr. High School, General Motors Corporation sent design teams out to the public schools to interest students in automobile designing. They promoted contests in designing automobile bodies. During their presentations they showed prototypes of their future automobile designs. At that time they designed automobile bodies about ten years ahead.

Sure enough, about ten years later in the sixties, I saw the reality of what they had showed us ten years earlier in the fifties. They were right on track. They were just what the prototypes had been in prospect. The men who had presented the prototypes certainly knew what they were saying. Jesus did the same with these three men with whom He dealt in our text. He means for us to see these kinds of “models” and to be aware of them—either in us or in others.

Consequently, these three men are original prototypes of attempted but false discipleship. They represent the typically false disciple who assumes that a partial or aspired discipleship is true discipleship and salvation. **The first man** shows the classic willful and inconsiderate impulse of the natural man, which fails to measure the cost and extent of a life of following the Man Who had nothing in this world. The priorities of the follower of Jesus cease to be things or places, but are His footprints only. He failed to perceive that Christ really does demand of every voluntary surrender exactly what the aspirant offers.

The second man could not follow Jesus; he could not be truly saved because he questioningly felt and hesitatingly leaned toward the call of conflicting obligations. The appeal of the propriety and etiquette of fleshly love—even that commanded to a degree by the Law of God—was, for him, a greater calling than that from Jesus Christ. What he considered more important in his life’s activities was a “Suffer me first,” which controlled his life, which self-centered priority placed Jesus Christ and His demanded support of the gospel into a poor secondary and subordinate posture in his life. His family was more important than a mandate from King Jesus, and that showed in his felt preferences toward his earthly father.

The third man is the model of a divided mind, which can never give full attention to the most important things in this life, namely Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. He was the epitome of the postponement of real surrender. “Wait until I finish up with what I consider more important” was the word

returned to Jesus. This is the kind of discipleship that looks back as much as it looks forward, saying, “Farewell” to the former life for a day, then a month, then a year, then a whole life of saying, “Farewell” to what was never really left. This kind of discipleship is a perpetual “Goodbye” that never ends until the pit opens and swallows it up. Then all the “Adieus” and “Sayonaras” can continue throughout an eternity of separation from Christ. Look around and see these kinds of false disciples everywhere. Jesus was right on track with these prototypes of this year’s models of half-hearted, supposed, would-be, attempted, but false disciples.

IN CONCLUSION

Jesus’ Pure Devotion and Requirement. Luke arranged this teaching from Jesus and the incidents that followed for effect. They show the devotion of Jesus to His Cross, and show the requirement of self-death in authentic discipleship. Beginning with His announcement of an approaching death, Jesus affirmed the same required devotion in His disciples. What He exhibited in His life was to be exhibited in disciples’ lives. He gave reasons for His requirement for a self-death, and even qualified its experience to be fundamentally connected to perceiving the comprehensive-ness of the kingdom of God. Wholehearted discipleship comes from deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin as the disciple appreciatively becomes devoted to Christ. This devotion from perceiving the comprehensiveness of the kingdom of God will bring a self-death that *denies yourself, takes up your cross, and follows Christ*.

Luke emphasized two closely related incidents from the life of Jesus as He traveled for the last time to Jerusalem. The **first** reveals Jesus’ wholehearted devotion to the Cross and to saving men’s lives. His self-death teaches a corresponding attitude in His disciples to save men’s lives. This is genuinely a living example of Jesus’ words earlier in Luke’s account, *whosoever*

⁷⁵ *Luke 9:24b*

will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.⁷⁵ Jesus' devotion displayed a spirit of selflessness that is the pattern for authentic wholehearted discipleship. Discipleship that possesses the reality of following Jesus is one of heartfelt devotion to saving men's lives for the Kingdom and for spiritual service and usefulness. That is only possible for the self-dead disciple.

The Natural Man Attempts Discipleship. The prospect of alive-to-self as distinct from dead-to-self discipleship is illustrated in the **final** incident in our text with three unauthentic disciples. Luke shows Jesus' irrefutable disregard for unauthentic devotion to Him. The three display conclusively that self-death is absolutely obligatory to following Christ. Unfaithfulness on the part of false disciples, or incomplete devotion by those claiming to be His followers, would ruin the testimony of God's work in the gospel. It would narrate to all listeners: "This gospel of Jesus Christ is a part-time and not so serious affair. You can take it or leave it as you wish. See! Look at how I handle it; I sometimes do, sometimes don't, and I am one of His." That is precisely what Christ forbids in our text. None of His authentic disciples are guilty of that. He will not allow it! Christ has only one kind of real and authentic disciple, only the wholehearted disciple.⁷⁶
Amen.

If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine.
John 8:31

⁷⁶ Even the wholehearted disciple "stumbles uphill" throughout this life to his Savior and into His likeness, but none the less does so wholeheartedly. In so doing he lives out the significance of our exposition's paradoxical axiom that defines the details of Authentic Wholehearted Discipleship as,

"Christ's compulsory requirements for voluntary cross-bearing."