

Self-denial and Cross Bearing

(Luke 9:23)

Introduction:

1. Several verses in Luke indicate that Jesus was very serious about inviting people to become His followers.
 - a. According to Luke 8:1, Jesus preached in *"every city and village."*
 - b. We learn from Luke 9:1-2 that Jesus sent the apostles out on the limited commission.
 - c. In Luke 10:1 Jesus sent out 70 others.
2. While Jesus was serious about inviting people to become His followers, He was also serious about the responsibilities that His followers must fulfill.
3. Jesus revealed 2 responsibilities to His followers in Luke 9:23 -- "self-denial" and "cross bearing."
4. To illustrate how important "self-denial" and "cross bearing" are, let us consider the Lord's statements in Luke 9:24-26.
5. In our lesson we are concentrating on the Lord's dealings with 3 men that we read about in Luke 9:57-62.
6. Our purpose for looking at these men is to help us examine ourselves to determine if we are fulfilling the responsibilities that the Lord has given us.

Discussion:

- I. (vs.57-58) JESUS DEALT WITH A MAN WHO WANTED TO FOLLOW HIM
 - A. (vs.57) This man said he would follow Jesus wherever He went.
 1. This man was:
 - a. a volunteer -- he approached the Lord
 - b. a "scribe" (Matthew 8:19).
 2. From what we know about this man up to this point, it would appear that he would have been an ideal follower of the Lord.
 - B. (vs.58) However, Jesus informed him that he would have to be willing to sacrifice to follow Him.
 1. While foxes have their dens and birds have their nests, Jesus did not have a place to lay His head.
 2. If this man followed Jesus, he may not have had a place to lay his head.
 - C. This man had to examine himself.
 1. Was having a home or following the Lord more important to him?
 2. Was he willing to deny himself and bear his cross?
- II. (vs.59-60) JESUS DEALT WITH A MAN HE DID CALL
 - A. The Lord told him, *"Follow me."*

1. This man was a disciple of the Lord (Matthew 8:21).
 2. The Lord wanted this man to respond to His call as Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew did (Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9).
- B. This man responded by asking the Lord to allow him **FIRST** to go and bury his father.
1. This is interesting because if the man's father had been dead, he would have been taking care of burying him (the Jews normally buried their dead the same day they died).
 2. Perhaps this man's father was advanced in years and the son wanted to wait until after his death to follow Christ.
- C. Jesus responded by telling him to let others take care of this matter.
1. Jesus was not saying that we do not have responsibilities to our parents.
 2. Jesus apparently knew that someone else could take care of the father.
 3. Jesus had an important mission for this man -- to go and preach the kingdom of God.
- D. This man had to examine himself.
1. Who did he love more: his father or the Lord? (see Matthew 10:37)
 2. Was he willing to deny himself and bear his cross?
- III. (vs.61-62) JESUS DEALT WITH ANOTHER VOLUNTEER
- A. This man wanted to follow Jesus, but he **FIRST** wanted to say good-bye to those at his home.
1. He wanted to place a condition on following the Lord (he imposed his own terms).
 2. His condition was going to cause him to take his focus off what was truly important.
- B. Jesus responded with those familiar words in vs.62.
- C. This man had to examine himself.
1. Was he willing to follow the Lord unconditionally?
 2. Was he willing to deny himself and bear his cross?

Conclusion:

1. When it comes to denying ourselves and bearing our crosses, we must put first those things that are of spiritual importance (Matthew 6:33a).
 - a. God's kingdom and His righteousness are not just to be some of the things that we seek along with many other things.
 - b. God's kingdom and His righteousness are to receive our utmost attention.
2. What is really important in your life?
3. You can tell what is really important by observing where you give your greatest attention, effort, and interest.
4. Do you need to be more serious about denying yourself and bearing your cross?
5. The Lord will bless you for the sacrifices that you make on His behalf (Luke 18:29-30).