

TEXT SERMONS

DISCIPLESHIP SERIES: **ENEMIES OF DISCIPLESHIP – Part 3**

Theme Verse: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

Message #9

"INDECISION"

Scripture:

Luke 9:61-62

"And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

The enemies of discipleship are many. The major categories are: the world, the flesh and the devil and each has its sub-divisions. We have often heard it said, "We are our own worst enemy." That is certainly borne out in the passage in Luke chapter nine that we have been studying. In these verses we have three self-defeating enemies that kill off our better selves. They have one thing common: they also kill discipleship!

Illust. The Great Wall of China is one of the world's great wonders. They built it so high that no one could get over it. And they built it so thick that no one could tunnel through it. They built this gigantic wall for their safety and security and built it so well that parts of it still exist today after many centuries. The people of China felt that the wall was impregnable and that their future was secure behind the wall. But in the first 100 years of its existence China was invaded three different times. The enemy did not come over the wall or tunnel through it but each time China was invaded, the enemy came through a gate left open for them by enemies inside! While the people of China lived in relative safety and security behind the wall, they failed to teach their children integrity and patriotism and they sold out to the enemy who bribed them to leave the gates unlocked and unguarded. The enemy outside invaded their land because of enemies on the inside!

We have met two internal enemies of discipleship: Mr. Impulsive and Mr. Indifference. Now we meet enemy number three, Mr. Indecision.

I. AN ACTUAL CASE OF INDECISION.

"And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:61,62)

This man is an excellent example of how indecision can be an enemy of discipleship. Let us get an overview of Jesus' conversation with him. First look at:

A. His Resolve. v.61

"Lord, I will follow You...." This is a grand resolve; it is right, commendable, reasonable and exemplary. What sweet words in the ears of the Savior. This man could well have sung: "I am resolved no longer to linger, charmed by the world's delight; things that are nobler, things that are higher, these have allured my sight."

Have you made that resolve? I hasten to add, as commendable as good resolves are, resolve alone is not enough. Do not overlook this man's reserve.

B. His Reserve- v.61 "but"

Right before our eyes this holy and beautiful resolve begins to dissolve. He said, "I will follow thee but" How sad. We had such high hopes for this young man. He seemed so sincere, so intent when he volunteered. But now he amends the original intention, he adds an addendum, he attaches a condition, he has a reservation - "I will follow thee but first"

What reservation do you have? How does the fine print in your commitment to Jesus Christ read? I will follow you but, what? This little word of three letters has side-tracked many a would be follower of Jesus.

C. His Request. v.61 "let me first bid them farewell who are at my house."

This request may appear to be a very innocent one on the surface. However, Jesus saw here a half-hearted man. A farewell visit might be safe for others but not for this would be follower. Jesus knew that a final farewell for this fellow would be fatal. A pity party would have ruined him.

Under the warmth of his home surroundings, with his family and friends, his courage would melt. For this man to make one last trip home would mean farewell to discipleship.

And, consider this: while he was cutting his umbilical cord what was Jesus to do? Sit on the curb and wait for him? How long will he be gone? We are to follow Jesus according to His time-table, not ours! It is His agenda that must take precedence, not ours!

D. His Rebuke. v.62 - "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Jesus' rebuke is firm, fitting and final. It substantiates our superstitions of this man's indecisive spirit. Now that we have been introduced to this man: His Resolve, Reserve, Request and Rebuke, let us examine his spiritual affliction:

II. THE FATAL CURSE OF INDECISION

I have called him "Mr. Indecision"- indecision, that was the curse, the enigma, the malady that neutralized him. Decision is making a choice between alternatives. Indecision is hesitancy or refusal to make a choice. It is a wavering between possible courses of action. Indecision is an age old curse. In 78 B.C. Cicero wrote: "There is grief in indecision."

Making right decisions is work! Decision making about important matters requires mental and spiritual energy. For those who are sincere it can be a very exacting process. It requires thinking and for the Christian, searching of God's Word, prayer and meditation. Many prefer someone else to make their decisions for them.

There are not a few Christians who are continually looking for some religious guru or superstar preacher or authority figure to tell them what to do. In matters spiritual in nature, the individual must personally make the decision. Mr. Indecision stood face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge was before him - He had to make a choice. No one could make it for him.

Let me be more precise: this man was undecided because he was torn between two alternatives. He was faced with the dilemma of dual loves and dual loyalties. Consider The following:

A. The Matter of Dual Loves.

This man was torn between family and faith. That is often the case. God's Word is clear on the matter of our love for our parents – we are to love them, honor them and children are to obey them. Jesus said, "He that loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." We are to love our family but when love for them transcends our love for the Lord we have to put Him first. When love for God and love for other humans come into collision, God must come first.

Jesus said, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:37-39)

B. Then There is The Matter Of Dual Loyalties.

Jesus made it crystal clear in that "No one can serve two masters." (Matt. 6:24) Elijah challenged the undecided in his day with these words: "how long do you halt between two opinions? If 'the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him."

As this man stands before Jesus, He is thinking about going onward with the Lord and he is thinking about going home. Jesus' rebuke in v. 62 reveals that this man was longingly looking in two directions at once. The curse of indecision had neutralized him.

James, in his epistle states, "a double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8) Indecisive persons are double minded. When confronted with two alternatives, they try to capitalize on both. That is double mindedness; that is the curse of indecision. Trying to be loyal to two masters is deadly to discipleship for a disciple is a follower – and we cannot follow two leaders, walk two directions, follow two paths and arrive at two destinations at the same time!

Illust. A young couple was lost on a rural road when they spotted a farmer. They stopped and asked, "Sir, could you give us some directions? The farmer replied, "yes, where do you want to go?" They both answered at the same time, but each gave different destinations which were in opposite directions. The farmer scratched his head and replied, "Trying to go in both directions at once is a going to be mighty hard on your car, isn't it?"

Indecision is a curse to discipleship, because the undecided are torn between two loves and two loyalties. That is the paralyzing effect of the curse of indecision. Mr. Indecision made no progress in either direction. He was immobile. He was endangering his future because he was undecided in the present.

Illust. George W. Cecil, whose pen name was William Lawrence, wrote:

"On the plains of hesitation bleach the bones of
countless millions who, at the dawn of victory,
sat down to wait - and waiting, died."

(American Magazine, March 1923, p. 87)

Indecision is a curse because it stifles progress. A young man, impressed by the fact that Alexander the Great had conquered the civilized world with his armies by age 30, asked, "Sir, how did you conquer the world so quickly?" The Emperor replied, "By not delaying!"

"Follow, follow, I would follow Him today,
While His tender voice is calling How can I delay?"

However, there is hope for the indecisive as I conclude, consider with me the.....

III. THE SCRIPTURAL CURE FOR INDECISION.

How does one break out of the grip of spiritual indecision? How do you make up your mind about following Christ devotedly? The answer is in this passage of scripture upon which we have been meditating.

Here are Jesus words again: "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:23-26) The cure for indecision is suggested in these words from the lips of Jesus. First,

A. Follow Your Holiest Desires.

"If anyone desires to come after Me...." If there is any stirring in your heart to yield to Christ's call; if any promptings to pursue heaven's agenda; if any interest in following Christ; yield to those desires – immediately! Delay is deadly. Second,

B. Focus On Life's Highest Purpose.

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" Life's highest purpose is to live for Jesus Christ! Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." (Phil.1:21) The choices are two: to live a Christ-centered life or a self-centered life. Third,

C. Face The Fact of Heavenly Judgment.

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” And, as Paul writes, “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” (Rom.14:10)

Mr. Indecision will meet Jesus again! He is coming again! We are not finished with Him – nor He with us! There is to be an accounting and there will be no excuse making then. “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. 14:11-12) At that time will the indecisive say to the Lord, “I could not make up my mind about following you”?

CONCLUSION

Moses led people who were, at times, indecisive. Listen to his straight-forward challenge to them:

“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life,.....” (Deut. 30:19-20)

Choose! We are made by our choices. The three men in Luke 9 made wrong choices! These three men represent three of the many enemies of discipleship. Look one last time at them:

- One was impulsive;
- One was indifferent;
- One was indecisive.

- Mr. Impulsive was too swift; -
- Mr. Indifference was too slow;
- Mr. Indecision was too soft.

- Mr. Impulsive was hot-hearted;
- Mr. Indifferent was hard hearted;
- Mr. Indecision was half-hearted;

- Mr. Impulsive was unprepared;
- Mr. Indifferent was unwilling;
- Mr. Indecision was unsure.
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The French Foreign Legion had a motto: “If I stumble pick me up; If I falter push me on; If I retreat shoot me.” There was to be no indecision.

Illust. In one of my former pastorates there was a very unusual man. I must say, he was quite a sight to see! He would come to church wearing two of about every piece of his clothing. His outfits varied every week. Sometime he would come wearing two shirts, two neck-ties or two

jackets; two different shoes, two different color socks, two belts or two different gloves. He was the strangest sight you ever saw! One Sunday I could not resist, so I asked him, "Why do you wear two of everything?" He answered, "Pastor, I just can't make up my mind."

Many Christians, with all their mental faculties, have the same problem in the realm of the spiritual. Let us make up our minds to follow Jesus Christ and do it now!

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