

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Monday, January 11

Listen

“Follow me.” (John 1:43)

When we say we look up to a person, because of who they are, what they have done, books they have written or their outlook on life, in a very real way we become a follower of them. We try to be like them, but only in certain ways. We may like some of the things that person says or does, but we don't fully imitate them.

When Jesus said, “Follow Me.” He was saying more than, just know and understand what I say. A rabbi's follower was known as his *talmidim* in the Hebrew. It was more than learning the rabbi's theology of God, how to interpret scripture, and what they thought. It meant they were to go with him wherever he went. They lived with him, so they would know not only what he thought, but they would emulate who he was and live as he lived. They imitate him. It was like a traditional apprenticeship in the classroom of life.

When Jesus say's “Follow Me.” He isn't saying, memorize everything I said, and know the theology behind what I am saying. It's deeper than that. **He calls us to be his apprentice in real life.** To walk with Him and to be shaped by how He lived to “abide in Him.”

“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.” (John 15:4-5)

To live, remain, abide in Jesus is to live in a way that imitates who Christ is every day. It is understanding that Jesus calls us to live a life that reflects who He is in the world. Martin Luther said it this way, ***“our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians....”*** (Martin Luther, Freedom of A Christian, 1520) We are to ***remain or have life*** in Christ. He is the vine we are the branches apart from Him there is no life.

When we “Follow Jesus,” we live/remain/abide in Him we understand that He give us life itself. We abide in Him we **bear fruit**. “Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) We **abide/live/remain in His Word**. (John 15:7) We **abide/live/remain in His love**. (John 15:9) We **abide/live/remain in His Commandments**. (John 15:10) In every aspect of our lives we abide/live/remain in Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus calls us to “Follow Me”, “so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:11) That we might have “life abundantly” (John 10:10)

Take **2 minutes** to think about these verses in John. If it helps fill the time, answer these questions: How do I abide in Christ every day? What does it mean that I live my life shaped by Jesus? Can you follow Jesus alone?

Lord Jesus, teach me today what it means to “Follow You.” Open my heart to follow You with my heart, soul, mind and strength through the Holy Spirit every day. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Tuesday, January 12

Pray

Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

(1 Samuel 3:9)

We often think that the old adage must be true. “The squeaky wheel gets the oil.” In this world the one who complains most often gets what they want. **When we come to God I believe it starts with the heart.** God wants us to come to Him with in humility and a sincere heart.

We are to come to Him to receive His strength and power in our lives. We are called to put on the armor of God and to stand firm in faith. We are to wear the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes to proclaim the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:13-17) We are also called through our baptism into Christ to be clothed in Him. **“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)**

If we are clothed in Christ through what Christ has done in the waters of baptism, we know that the Christ is truth, our righteousness, His gospel is peace, faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ has given us salvation through faith in Him, The Word is the work of the Holy Spirit and still inspired today. We come as we are, broken into His presence because of all that Christ Jesus has done for us. We come to Him with nothing, he provides us with all we need.

Samuel heard the voice of the LORD, even though Samuel didn’t understand at first God was patient with Him. He spoke to Him, not because of what He had done, but because his humility and sincere heart. When we ask the LORD to intervene in our lives, it is a matter of the heart. While it is true that Jesus says we should be persistent in prayer, like the widow and the unjust judge, (Luke 18:1-8, or the man with unexpected guests asking his friend to give him three loaves of bread at midnight. (Luke 11:5-10) They needs that the people had called for persistence in prayer. Their heart was in the right place.

So, **“Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place” (1 Samuel 3:9)** Then the LORD spoke to Him. When we come to the LORD come to Him in humility and a sincere heart. It’s then that He will speak to you, through the Word, or others or in what other may think as a coincidence. With God there are no coincidences.

Take **2 minutes** to pray about what you have been learning from God. Remember: He calls us to come to Him in humility and a sincere heart.

Dear Lord, teach me to come to You with in humility and with a sincere heart. Lord _____ (pray for what You need). Open my ears that I may hear Your will in my life through Your Word and others You have sent to guide me. Teach me to trust in You for all things. In Jesus name. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Wednesday, January 13

Sometimes I don't see it right away or I don't understand (until later or at all) why certain things happen in my life and I wonder why God would put me in that situation. I know that God has a plan for me and He's with me all the time, but it's hard sometimes to see where He's going with things. But no matter my lack of understanding, I hold on to my faith in God and the hope that He has instilled in me.

Before writing out today's verse, Romans 5:5, take a moment to read Romans 5:1-5.

Romans 5:5

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Activity: Draw a heart in your journal and color it in as you think of the ways God has poured His love in to you (even in times of 'tribulation').

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Thursday, January 14

Study

"¹⁷ But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:17)

"What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer."—E.M. Bounds

We usually think of what we need in terms of this world. We think if we could be better, or stronger or do more things we'd have it made. That's not the way the Holy Spirit works. It isn't in being better, stronger, or doing more things, but in realizing that we are united with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has become one with our spirit. So, we look for His guidance in our lives first.

"¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God," (Romans 8:14-16) God leads us by His Holy Spirit that we might first of all know our identity in Him. We are His children. For it is ***"(God's) Spirit (that bears) witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Romans 8:16)*** our identity is given us through faith in Jesus Christ in God as His children. That means we are ***"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17b-c)***

With our identity as children of God now we learn to listen to Him, rather than the influences of this world. ***"Anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him." (1 Corinthians 6:17)*** In that we find peace. We don't have to search for that which may satisfy us for the moment we know the one who fulfills all that we need for eternity.

Almighty God, as Your child teach me to listen to Your Holy Spirit and to be guided by You now and forever. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Friday, January 15

Hymn Devotion: *O Jesus, I have Promised*

Scripture: John 1:43-51 - **Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael**

History: John Ernest Bode was an Anglican clergyman serving a small parish near Cambridge, England when his three children, a daughter and two sons, were ready for confirmation. Bode not only presided over their confirmation, but also wrote this hymn especially for the occasion—telling the children that the hymn included “all the important truths I want you to remember.” The hymn was originally, “O Jesus, We Have Promised”—in view of the fact that more than one child was involved in the confirmation.

*1 O Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Remain forever near me,
My master and my friend.
I shall not fear the battle
If you are by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If you will be my guide.*

*2 Oh, let me feel you near me;
The world is ever near.
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear.
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, then draw nearer
To shield my soul from sin.*

*3 Oh, let me hear you speaking
In accents clear and still
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will.
Now speak to reassure me,
To hasten or control;
Now speak and make me listen,
O Guardian of my soul.*

*4 O Jesus, you have promised
To all who follow you
That where you are in glory
Your servant shall be too.
And Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Oh, give me grace to follow,
My master and my friend.*

Devotion: The title of this song was eventually changed to “O Jesus, I Have Promised”. By personalizing this hymn from “We” to “I”, it serves as an appropriate hymn of commitment for every Christian. In the Gospel for this week, we read of Jesus calling Philip and Nathaniel to be disciples. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? It means we commit to following God. We learn how to do this by studying God’s word and also learning from those that teach from it. But it doesn’t come from just learning. We need to put God’s word into our actions, serving Him through our thoughts, words, and deeds. Yet, God knows that we will fall short and experience failures. But we are comforted by the promise that He will be there by our side as our “guide”, “shield”, “guardian”, “master”, and our “friend”. As we remember our promises to Jesus to love and serve Him, we are assured of His great promise to us - that we will live with Him in glory forever.

Prayer: Dear Jesus. As Your follower, we praise You for Your promise of eternal life. However, we know we stumble and fall at times in this life, and we know that our earthly temptation may cause us to stray. And, without You, our life has no direction or meaning. We ask that You please walk with us and be our guide and guardian. We thank you for being our master and our friend, and we ask You to help us to see Your glory as we walk in Your light. In Your name we pray, AMEN.

Source: — [1] Copyright 2006, Richard Niell Donovan <https://sermonwriter.com/hymn-stories/o-jesus-promised/>

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Saturday, January 16

Prepare for Worship

Psalm 139:2

**² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.**

Our gospel reading for the weekend provides a concrete example of this verse. Jesus knew Nathanael from far away. Even when Jesus was far away, he knew that Nathanael was there under the fig tree. When we return to Psalm 139 with this gospel fresh on our minds, we are sensitive to how Jesus is exercising his power as God in the gospel story. Jesus has knowledge of Nathanael that surpasses what Nathanael even knows of himself. And the encounter this young man had with Jesus is the same encounter that all of us have when we consider the thoughts of God towards us. We can proclaim with a holy fear, “O Lord, you have searched me and known me!” (Psalm 139:1). This is a God who sees everything. Even the things we like to hide in the dark are known to him for, “even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as day, for darkness is as light with you.” (Ps. 139:12). This is the God we come to worship. The one who knows us and the one who crafted us. If there was ever an owner’s manual to a human being, God would have the knowledge to write it. All of this doesn’t drive the worshipper to despair even though there are things about ourselves we would rather keep in the dark. Instead, this psalm leads to wonder and prayer. The psalm writer is in awe of God’s knowledge and creativity in creating not just human beings in general, but his own person and personality in particular. He prays against his enemies and he also prays that God would continue to do what the Psalmist has been praying about this whole time. “Search me, O God, and know my heart!” (Ps. 139:23). God’s penetrating knowledge doesn’t give way to fear in the end, but a request that God would continue to be close. That he would keep a watchful eye on our lives and “lead us in the way everlasting!” (Ps. 139:24).

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, you call us all like you called the disciples through Jesus Christ. You call us with our name, knowing each and every one of us that you have crafted. You are not discovering anything new when we come to you, but you provide promises of new life every time we attend to your word. Send your Holy Spirit to help us worship you, the God who knows us even when we are “far off.” In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Sunday January 17

Praise

John 1:51

⁵¹ And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Some people just can't help but say what's on their minds. Nathanael was one of those people. When Jesus had shown just a pinch of divinity, Nathanael exploded in confession, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!” Jesus goes on to say, in so many words, “You haven't seen nothing yet.” Jesus promises Nathanael that the power of God is going to be on display in the life of Jesus. Jesus calls us all like he had called Nathanael and the other disciples. We can be astonished by his knowledge of us at the outset. But, as time goes on, a Christian will be surprised again and again by the power of God. Yet, we might not always see the power of God like we had expected. Knowing that all the disciples ran away from the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested, we can be certain that Nathanael was surprised that “the king of Israel!” would have to suffer and be crucified. Nathanael was a disciple that ran away from the power of God on display in that moment. We have the benefit of knowing the full story, and still God surprises us just like Nathanael. We can praise God knowing that he who provided the call to us, “Follow me,” will never leave us or forsake us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, your knowledge of us is absolutely astounding. Your power doesn't always accomplish what we think it should—or it accomplishes something in a way we never thought possible. Please strengthen us to stand firm in faith trusting in you in Jesus' name, Amen