

Follow Me

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[0 : 00] Matthew 9 from verse 9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom.

And he said unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. I want to take another week away from Acts just now.

And I'll tell you the reason why I want to do that. And that is sometimes I feel as if I am going through a passage like Acts, or a book like Acts, that I'm not sometimes meeting all the needs of the people who are before me.

And there are times when I feel that while I'm giving instruction to the Lord's people, that I am not showing sinners the way to Christ.

And it's for that reason that I, from time to time, take texts like this. Because really I want to speak to those of you who are unconverted.

[1 : 11] Those of you who do not have Christ as Saviour. I address you today from these texts. Follow me. You know, Matthew is a man who wrote this gospel.

Matthew is a man who wrote this gospel. And that's the very man that we are reading of in verses 9 to 13 there. Matthew is here describing his own conversion.

And you look at how he describes it so simply. He would have taken approximately about 10 seconds to read such a thing. How many of us can tell our conversions in such a short time.

We always perhaps want to dramatize. We want to make things more attractive and more open, more extravagant than they really were.

But here's Matthew and he says that Jesus came to him and he said, follow me. And I arose and followed him. Beautiful story about how someone came to place his faith in Jesus Christ.

[2 : 29] Now I want us to look first of all at this man, this sinner, Matthew. You'll notice he was a tax collector. Here you might not realize that, but it says he was sitting at the receipt of custom.

That was really the booth where the tax collector would sit. And he was sitting at the boundary between two regions. And the people who were bringing the trades in and the treasures in, the people who were bringing in food and all that, they had to go through this place where Matthew was sitting.

And they could only get by if they paid Matthew a tax. They had to pay the custom dues to Matthew. Now remember we were looking at Zacchaeus a number of weeks ago in the evening.

And Zacchaeus was also a tax collector. But you'll notice that there's a great difference between Matthew and Zacchaeus. Yes, they were both tax collectors.

Yes, they were both sinners. They were among the lowest of the law. You remember that tax collectors were classed with prostitutes. They were classed with the drunkards.

[3 : 44] They were classed with the people who wanted to know nothing deep about God and who cared nothing for his law. Zacchaeus and Matthew were both alike in that respect.

They were despised by the Pharisees, as we will see. But you know they were quite different in the way that Jesus dealt with them and in the way Jesus found them.

You'll notice first of all that Matthew was very happy at his work. He was sitting at the receipt of custom. Sitting in the tax collector's booth.

He was very, very happy at his work. There's nothing to indicate that he was at all annoyed with the kind of lifestyle he had or with his work at all.

He was sitting there quite happily taking money from these people. Often taking more money than they were due to give him. These tax collectors often cheated, badly cheated, and extorted money from the people.

[4 : 48] But Matthew, he doesn't seem to show any regret at this at all. He's happy with his work. Now Zacchaeus, remember, he already had pangs of conscience by this time.

And he went out to seek Jesus. He heard that Jesus was passing by and what he had done for other tax collectors. And he wanted to meet this man Jesus. He almost seemed already to be unhappy with his work.

And he was willing to leave it behind. But not Matthew. Matthew was quite happy at his work. Matthew was also quite happy with his lifestyle.

You'll notice later on, he made a feast for Jesus in his house. And many publicans, that's tax collectors, and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

These were still Matthew's friends. The tax collectors and the sinners. Those who were among the lowest of the low. Those who were classed as outside the kingdom of God and God's people.

[6 : 02] Matthew still enjoyed their company. He still enjoyed that kind of lifestyle. And there's nothing to show that he was unhappy with this at all.

Zacchaeus, it would seem, was different. Zacchaeus was leaving behind all that in order to seek Jesus. Matthew was different.

Matthew was also happy without Jesus. Happy without Jesus. Zacchaeus wasn't.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. He wanted to know more about Jesus. Zacchaeus had an interest in Jesus. And he wanted to fill that interest and to satisfy it.

But not Matthew. Matthew was happy without Jesus. He was happily there sitting in his tax booth. Happily enjoying his lifestyle.

[7 : 08] Happy without Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He was happy. Are you happy today? I suspect that most of you are.

But some of you will be happy with your work. Some of you will be happy with your lifestyle. And some of you will be happy without Jesus.

Are you honest enough to say to yourself that you are happy without Jesus? Jesus. Because that's what it's all about.

It's not about coming to church or anything like that. It's about you and Jesus. Are you happy without Jesus?

Matthew was. Happy in his work, in his lifestyle, and without Jesus.

[8 : 19] No apparent conviction of sin. no apparent regret at his way of life. No interest in Christ.

You know, this is the kind of passion that most Christians keep away from. And I include myself.

When we find people that are happy at their work and in their life and have no interest in Jesus, we almost tend to keep away and say, well, there's little hope for work there.

And if we find somebody that has an interest in Jesus, even the tiniest interest, we say, ah, there's hope for that man.

That man's been coming to church. That man's been seeking. That man's asking questions.

Therefore, there's hope for that man. He's showing an interest.

[9 : 24] Matthew wasn't like that. But that's the one that Jesus went to. He came up to that man who was happy in his work, happy in his life, happy without Jesus.

Jesus came to him and said, follow me. And he arose and followed him. You have just read a miracle.

He arose and followed him. That is a miracle. Nothing short of a miracle.

That one like Matthew should rise up immediately and leave everything as Luke tells us and follow Jesus.

That is a miracle. Now what happened to Matthew? What happened to this man that changed him?

[10 : 35] He heard two words, follow me. and these two words were a call addressed to Matthew that changed his life, that changed the direction of his life, that changed the center of his life.

Two short words, follow me. you might think, surely that can't be right. Surely there must have been something else.

Surely he must have known Jesus before. Perhaps he did know Jesus before, but he still seems quite happy with his life and work and without Jesus.

it was these two words that made the difference to the life of Matthew. And you'll notice what's happened is this, that when Jesus addressed these two words to Matthew, these words themselves went into Matthew's heart and changed him.

And it made him see Jesus as the most important person in the world. And Jesus' work as the most important work in the world.

[12:07] And that he should follow Jesus as the most important thing that he could do. These two words gave birth of these things in Matthew.

Jesus is important. His work is important. And I must follow Jesus. Jesus addressed these words to one who seemed to have no interest.

But then once they were spoken to him, Matthew couldn't stay in that tax booth any longer. he couldn't stay there.

He had to get up and he had to follow this man Jesus. But you say, oh, but it's so different with us. And that's what I want to look at primarily today. That most of us say, yes, that's what happened to Matthew. you.

[13:17] But it's so different with us. There may be some of you sitting in the church today and there is nothing you would love better than to have Jesus come to you and say, follow me.

And you would love then to get up and to follow Jesus. But you have two problems, don't you? follow me. The first problem is that you're not sure is Jesus saying to you, follow me.

That's your first problem. Matthew had no problem like that because Jesus was physically standing in front of him and addressing him with these words which you could hear, follow me.

But you don't have that, do you? you're wanting to be a Christian but you're scared to take a step because you're not sure has Jesus spoken to me?

Has Jesus addressed me? Has Jesus called me and said follow me? That's what's bothering you.

[14:37] God has to respond to you. The second problem that you have is that you're not sure how to respond to this call.

For Matthew there was no problem. Follow me Jesus said. What he had to do was to get up and physically follow Jesus. No problem at all in knowing how to respond.

but you do have a problem don't you? Your problem is that you're not sure how can you respond to a call that you're not sure you have heard.

And even if you were sure you heard it, how can you follow Jesus when he's in heaven and you're in this world? How can you respond?

you're scared to respond in case you're not called and you're not sure to respond if you were called?

[15:46] How does Jesus call you then? Obviously it's not physically. Three things that you must know.

The first thing is what Jesus said as the father has sent me even so send I you. To whom did Jesus say these words?

He said them to the disciples. The father sent me he said and I am sending you into the world. And these people who are sent by Jesus into the world they have a message and the message is this in the name of Christ be reconciled to God.

I have a message to give to you on behalf of Christ and that message is be reconciled to God or to put it in the words of our text here follow me.

Christ speaks through his people to this world. That's why he sent me into the world.

[17:11] That's why he sent these elders into the world. That's why he sent the deacons into the world. That's why he sends every Christian as we will see in Acts into the world so that they can go out and call people to Jesus Christ.

Jesus says follow me. Christ's people say follow Jesus. So how do you know that Jesus is speaking to you?

It's when you hear the people of God challenging you to follow Jesus. they wouldn't do that if Christ had not commanded them to do it.

And I say today on behalf of Christ follow Jesus. Secondly Christ calls you through his word.

Christ calls you through his people today follow Jesus. but Christ also calls you through the word.

Ah but you say that's not true.

[18:33] What we have here follow me you have it in the text and you say but that's addressed to Matthew. That's not addressed to me. Well it's interesting.

I suspect that for most of the commands that Jesus gives to people like Matthew and Zacchaeus and Jairus and the other disciples commands like come take believe follow drink eat these are commands that Jesus addresses to people asking the people to come to him.

Yes you find them in specific situations like we have here with Matthew follow me but you look up Mark 8 and you will find this command has been broadened to all people whoever would follow me let him take up his cross and follow me whoever will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me you know it's interesting this whole week again we were looking at the Gaelic Bible translation and my part in that is from the Greek side of it to check what the Gaelic scholars are writing and it's amazing even this week how often in the New Testament and in the Gospels which we were looking at how often the words whosoever whomsoever if anyone words like that are given out in these

Gospels it's never just addressed to specific people it's whosoever if anyone will it's in these kind of terms that we have them you see the word of God if you read it honestly it addresses you remember the rich man and Lazarus the rich man had his great things in his life Lazarus was a beggar they both died Lazarus went to heaven the rich man lifted up his eyes in torment and he speaks with Abraham over in heaven and he asks Abraham send Lazarus to my brother still in the world so that he can warn them not to come to hell but

Abraham says no they have the Bible they have got the scriptures that is enough to warn them to go to Jesus and not to come to hell but the rich man says no that is not enough if someone from the dead came and spoke to them then they would believe no Abraham said if they don't believe the scriptures they wouldn't believe even if someone rose from the dead now you remember that you're asking for something special before you come to follow Jesus you're asking for someone very special to come and speak to you as if someone came from the dead to speak or as if your name was written in the clouds in the sky follow me and your name after it but

[22 : 35] Jesus himself says in that parable the scripture is enough to keep you from hell and by implication to bring you to Jesus Christ Jesus calls you to himself through the Bible don't go looking for something special God calls you through his people God calls you through his word because his people can only call as they use the words of scripture you're still saying though how can I be sure that he's calling me God calls you Jesus calls you through his

Holy Spirit that's it you say that's exactly what I haven't got you're right minister when you say that he's calling through the people and how many Christians have spoken to you and said follow Jesus you're right they're doing it because Jesus commanded them to yes minister you're right when you say he calls through the word I've read these passages in the Bible and undoubtedly they're addressed so wide to all the people who whosoever will let him come let him drink of the water of life freely but this is what I'm missing you see he's not calling me through his spirit and I'm scared because

I don't want to respond to this call unless I know for sure that God is speaking to me through his spirit because you see I hear people who became Christians and they say the spirit of God changed my life the spirit of God helped me to understand the gospel I would not be a Christian you hear them say if it were not for the spirit of God how true but how wrong you are you see God's spirit does work when his people speak when they speak the word of God when I go out in the name of Jesus and when I address the commands of Jesus to you and I say follow Jesus come to Jesus trust in Jesus that's the channel through which the Holy Spirit normally works through his word as read or heard that's how the Spirit of God works to get to you because as you hear this word this gospel message if the Spirit of God is speaking to you what will happen you will begin to listen you will begin to hear you will begin to understand you will begin to be concerned what about holiness when the

Holy Spirit speaks to you you will be concerned with holiness and by holiness I mean this how your life matches the standards of God when I say that the Holy Spirit works he works in a way that people will become concerned and they become concerned about holiness and by holiness I mean that how your life matches the standards of God and is that not what's happened to you as you've heard God's people speak to you as you've heard God's word addressed to you as you've read your own Bibles you've become concerned concerned about your relationship with your maker your judge the one with whom you will have to meet that has come from the

[28 : 06] Spirit of God that's a concern that is given never by Satan but by the Spirit of God Satan doesn't want you to be bothered about that relationship or if he does he certainly doesn't want you to do anything serious about it but when God's Spirit is working with you when he is striving with you he makes you concerned in such a way that you cannot brush it aside you cannot forget about it if it's Satan that's letting you become concerned it will come for a burst and then go away and

you'll be satisfied with that burst of conscience and you'll say oh

I feel bad about my sin I'm not right with God and that satisfies you and then you carry on but when the Spirit of God is working in you you become so concerned that you want to know the end of the story you want to be right with God you're not happy with white wash you're not happy with covering your sins over and people and ministers giving you nice platitudes you're not happy with that because you want to know you really want to know how you stand with God that's what the Holy Spirit does when he works in a passion so

God Jesus does call you he calls you through his people he calls you through his word and he calls you through his spirit you're scared because you're not sure you'll be sure God is working in you you can't brush it aside you will be sure but you must respond you must respond to this call and that's what I want to look at next Sabbath morning let us pray Lord God almighty we pray that thou wouldst draw near to us that thou wouldst draw near to us through thine own word and spirit grant oh

Lord that we will not be made happy with a mere attendance at church but that thy word would sink into our hearts and that it would grow that it might not be choked by the pleasures of this life that it might not be taken away by the evil one oh that it might grow and that it might produce great fruit as we hear thy voice and follow thee encourage thy people we pray thee this morning to know that they have followed Christ and those that are seeking thee Lord grant that they might hear that call afresh in the way in which thou hast ordained through the Bible spoken by thy people them understanding it by thy spirit do lead us into this rest of this day and be with us in the evening and pardon sin for
Christ sake Amen