

LOOKING UNTO JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE

Ben Wright

There is no doubt that we need examples in life. Many things are learned by watching the example of others. Along with that comes the responsibility of choosing the right example to follow and also know when an example is being set. We could end up like several dinner guests at the White House during the presidency of Calvin Coolidge. These particular guests were worried about proper table manners at the White House so they decided to follow the example of President Coolidge. Everything he did at the table they would do as well. Everything went fine through dinner. His example was followed to the hilt and there were no embarrassing episodes. However, when coffee was served things went bad. President Coolidge poured some of his coffee onto the saucer, so his guests did as well. He then mixed cream and sugar with the coffee on the saucer. His guests did as well. Then, President Coolidge put the saucer in the floor for his cat.

Each of us needs a proper example to follow in all things. Our Lord is the only One that could fit the bill as being able to be imitated in all things. Peter wrote this about Jesus: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). John had this to say: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Maste, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I hvae done to you" (John 13:14-15). These three verses, and others, provide for us the biblical command to follow the example of Jesus.

The word "example" in 1 Peter 2:21 is an interesting word when looked at in the original language. According to The Complete Wordstudy New Testament, this word comes from two words that mean "to write under." It carries the idea of teaching to write. Literally, it is a model for imitation. When learning to write letters, many times tablets with the letters written at the top of the page are used. The student is then to imitate in writing, to the best of his ability, the letters written at the top of the page. This is the copy-book method of learning. You see, the standard is at the top of the page and you practice writing until you can imitate the standard.

In this passage, we are taught that Jesus is at the top of the page and we learn to handle suffering by looking to Him and doing our best to imitate His actions. We do this so we can follow His footprints, which is the literal meaning for "his steps." Just as the child steps in the prints of his father as he follows him through the snow, we are to walk in the steps of Jesus as we pass through the suffering and trials of this life.

The example that Jesus set in this context is not returning violence or abuse for what was given to Him. He did not act in kind, but dealt with it in silence, giving Himself over to the will of God. Jesus knew that God would do what was right and just. Such was the attitude that allowed Him to say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit..." (Luke 23:46). When it comes to facing persecution for being a follower of Christ, the Christian

is to look to the example of Jesus and do as He did. Do not respond in kind, but leaving the avenging and judging up to a righteous God.

John's verse is in an interesting context as well. John told his readers that knowing God involved keeping the commandments of God (1 John 2:3). There were those in John's day who said that they had special knowledge of God that other Christians did not have. These people were called Gnostics. Their beliefs led them to indulge in the sins of the flesh because they had a false idea about the spirit and the flesh dwelling together. These people that claimed to have special knowledge did not follow the commands of God. John tells them that if they say they are in Christ and abiding in Christ, then they will act like Christ.

How did Christ act? The answer to that is He obeyed the will of the Father. Jesus told a group of Jews "...I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). On another occasion Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

If a Christian is going to walk, or deport oneself like (Strong's), like Jesus, then he must follow the commands of God as Jesus did. As Jesus said, our meat should be to do the will of the Father (John 4:34). His example is one of complete submission to the will of God in all things.

In John 13, we have the account of Jesus washing the apostles feet the night before His death. Jesus was not invoking a command to wash feet but to be servants. If we are going to follow the example of Jesus we are going to be servants to others. Our Lord served others in many ways. He taught people the message of the kingdom. He healed people. Ultimately, Jesus served mankind by dying on the cross. If we are going to follow His example, nothing should be beneath us when it comes to serving others.

We should look to Jesus by following His example in suffering correctly, obeying the will of the Father and serving others. If we do this, others then can follow our example because we are following after Christ.