



“Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus”

Kevin Presley

Most of us enjoy visiting historical places. It is inspiring to stand in the place where the world was changed and perhaps imagine being there when history was made. But there is no place I would rather go than to the land where Jesus lived and walked long ago. I think many of us would want to do that if given the opportunity. Yet, the Bible tells us something about walking in the steps of the Savior.

1 Peter 2:21 “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:”

What does it really mean to trace the footsteps of Jesus and walk the same path He walked? Most of us will likely never journey to the town of Bethlehem, the banks of the Jordan River, the cobblestone streets of Jerusalem, or walk the shores of Lake Galilee. But we can go there in faith. In fact, if we follow Jesus, we MUST go there by faith. The Apostle Peter said that we are called to walk in the footprints of the Lord Jesus Christ. But how? Today, we’ll discuss a few ways that we do just that.

First, if I truly walk in the footprints of Jesus, they will lead me thru the waters of baptism. Did you know the very first act of Jesus’ public ministry was to be baptized by the hands of John?

Mark 1:9-11 “And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

In fact, when Jesus came to John at the Jordan River asking him to baptize him, John hesitated. He couldn’t imagine why he would be called upon to immerse one as great as Christ. But Jesus insisted and said it must be done to *“fulfill all righteousness”* (**Matthew 3:15**).

The baptism that Jesus commanded all men to submit to was *“for the remission (or forgiveness) of sins”* (**Acts 2:38**). John’s baptism was also for that purpose in a prospective sense according to **Luke 3:3**. Also, John’s converts were instructed to *confess their sins* (**Matthew 3:6**). But Jesus had no sins to confess or forgive. That wasn’t why He was baptized by John. First, His purpose was to fulfill the requirements of God and set an example for others to follow. Second, it prevented the confusion of having two teachers who claimed to be sent from God preaching two messages independent of each other.

Today, Jesus has enjoined upon every penitent believer the obligation of baptism. He said *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (**Mark 16:16**). Peter left none out when he told the people on Pentecost day to *“repent and be baptized, EVERYONE OF YOU, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”* (**Acts 2:38**). If we would follow in the footsteps of the Lord, those steps will lead us to and thru the waters of baptism. Not only do we follow His literal example of submitting to baptism, but in **Romans 6**, the apostle Paul shows us how we beautifully imitate our Lord in another way during the sacred transaction.

Romans 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

In baptism, we personalize the great facts of the gospel. We cannot be crucified upon Christ’s cross, but we can crucify our old man and his selfish aims and desires. We cannot enter the tomb of Jesus, but we can be buried with Him in a liquid tomb, having died to this world and its sin. And we can triumphantly come out of that watery grave. Just as Jesus broke the surly bonds of death, we--through the blood of Jesus and the power of His resurrection--can break the stranglehold that sin and death had upon our souls and come out of that state to a brand new life IN CHRIST!

Friends, it’s impossible to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and not enter the waters of baptism. People today minimize baptism and its importance, but not Jesus our Lord. He made it the first step in a penitent believer’s obedience and he placed it between sin and salvation. And if you’ve not followed Him in this divinely sanctioned step, you need to do so today.

Second, the footsteps of Christ will lead me into the house of worship. After Christ’s baptism and the commencement of His earthly ministry, the Bible says:

Luke 4:16 “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.”

Jesus not only used the synagogue as a place from which to influence others with His teaching, but He also was engaging in the common religious practice of God’s people. The temple was the place where sacrifices were offered and the synagogue was primarily where the law was read and taught. The person who faithfully follows in the footsteps of Jesus today will be found regularly and willingly in the house of the Lord.

Did you know that God expects that of you? The idea is quite popular today that a person doesn’t *need* the church. People talk about having their own personal relationship with Jesus as though that means they have no obligation to the Lord’s church. I believe that every single person who has the physical power to do so will be in the assembly of the church every Sunday, if they are faithful. The scriptures say

of the first century disciples that they “*continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers*” (**Acts 2:42**). The apostle Paul thought it was important enough that he delayed his journey long enough to meet with the church at Troas and worship with them on the following Sunday.

Acts 20:7 “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow.”

The church should be the center of every Christian’s life. When Jesus was only twelve years old, He had gone with his parents to Jerusalem for the Passover and when they started back home they discovered that Jesus was missing. They went back to Jerusalem to find Him and after searching the city, they found Him in the temple.

Luke 2:48-49 “So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously. And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”

Jesus was no stranger to the house of worship and neither is any true disciple of Jesus. And by the way, some may argue that they don’t go to church because there are hypocrites there. And, yes, unfortunately there are. But there were plenty of hypocrites in the synagogue that Jesus attended, I’ll assure you! Jesus called them hypocrites and serpents and everything else. But that didn’t change Jesus’ affection for the house of God and His devotion to it. If I am following in the footsteps of Jesus today, I will also be led to the house of worship.

Third, the footsteps of Jesus will lead me into the fields of service. And this is where Jesus spent the vast majority of His short life on the earth. The shortest but most complete biography of the life of Christ is recorded in **Acts 10:38** where the scripture says that He “*went about doing good.*” That’s what Jesus’ life was all about. He did good wherever He went. He came to seek and save the lost. He selflessly left Heaven to live amongst a howling mob of sinful men and to be crucified at their hands and He did so because He loved us and wanted to save us from our sins. He is like a shepherd who went out into the cold, dark night to search for His lost sheep. His life was one of mercy, pity and compassion. He cared about those who were less fortunate. His heart broke for the sick, the weak, the crippled and the blind. He wept alongside others over the loss of their loved ones. He felt the pain of parents who lost their children. He felt the pains of hunger that were felt by the multitudes who wandered out to hear Him. He was a friend to the people who had no other friends. He went into the lowliest places of society and salvaged the wrecks of humanity. He gave hope to the hopeless and he gave help to the helpless.

Luke 22:27 “He was not as one sitting at meat, but as one that serveth.”

That means instead of sitting at a seat of honor and recognition, he took the place of a slave and waited upon others. Those who follow Jesus today will gladly spend and be spent in the fields of service. There is no job too lowly for the servant of Christ. Jesus said that if we feed the hungry, clothe the poor and naked, visit the sick and those in prison, we do those things unto Him (**Matthew 25:35-40**).

Living as Jesus lived isn’t easy. It’s a tough thing to roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty with the problems of others. It’s inconvenient to stop and take time for the beggar by the wayside or the person who has a pressing problem they need our help to solve. It’s sometimes back-breaking to carry our

burdens and help someone else carry theirs, too. But that's what living like Jesus is all about. If I walk in the footsteps of Jesus, they will not only lead me thru the house of worship, they'll lead me o'er the fields of service, too.

But fourth, the footsteps of Jesus will also lead me to a rugged cross.

Mark 15:22,24 "And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a skull...and they crucified Him."

The steps of Jesus led up a difficult and lonely hill and took Him to His death. It was a walk of shame. In a parade of criminals and calloused soldiers, Jesus was pushed and shoved up the hill of Calvary. His death was not a challenge; it required humility to the point of humiliation. His death took accepting not just death, but the most horrible and degrading of deaths known in ancient times. Stripped naked and already bruised and bleeding from the scourging He had received, His exhausted body was stretched out on a splintery piece of wood, His hands were opened and the point of a rusty spike was placed in its palm and with each blow of the soldier's hammer, the spike was driven through His quivering flesh into the cross. His feet were laid one on top of the other and a long nail pierced them both and secured Him to the crudely fashioned cross. It was lifted high and with a thud, dropped into its socket and the body of our Lord sagged beneath its own weight. He hung there for six hours and suffocated to death while people sat at the foot of His cross and gambled and swore. They mocked and ridiculed and spat on Him until He finally died. That's the story of His cross, but my friends, there's a cross for you to bear, too. Jesus must have had that awful scene in mind when He said:

Luke 9:23-24 "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

The cross we must bear isn't made of wood and spikes; it's made of shame and reproach. It's made of sacrifice and service. It's made of the many burdens and hardships of life. The old hymn says:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone
And there's a cross for me.

-----Thomas Shepherd, 1693

A lot of people today want the crown the Lord offers without the cross He gives. They want to be Christians, but they don't want to walk in the footsteps of Jesus if those steps lead to earthly loss, or embarrassment, or a struggle of any kind. They want to walk down the primrose path to Heaven and live happily ever-after. But that's not the way our Lord walked and that's not where His steps lead. The Bible even says of the apostles that *"they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name"* (Acts 5:41). Are you glad to carry the cross of Jesus on your shoulders? Will you crucify your own selfish pride, and desire to be like Jesus and walked as He walked? The verse that we read at the beginning, it's talking about suffering! The ultimate suffering!

I Peter 2:21 "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also SUFFERED for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

What did he mean by suffering? What kind of suffering might we even have to bear to follow Jesus? Well, Peter tells us in the next chapter.

I Peter 3:18 “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh...”

Will you REALLY follow in the steps of Jesus? Is that a cross you’re REALLY willing to bear? You’re not truly following Jesus if you’re not willing to follow Him wherever His footsteps may eventually lead. Walking in the steps of Jesus is not a trite expression... it’s unwavering faith, resignation, full consecration and commitment.

But listen, last and best of all, I want to say that the footsteps of Jesus lead to the throne of God. The steps of our Savior don’t end in a dark valley, but in triumph. They burst into the glorious light of the great beyond! The Psalmist painted a glorious picture of the ascension and coronation of the King of kings.

Psalm 24:7 “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors and the King of glory will come in!”

A few days after Christ came out of Joseph’s tomb, he spoke to his disciples from one of the summits of the Mount of Olives. He began to ascend and a cloud of heaven took Him away. While they watched Him go, the angels watched Him arrive. They inaugurated Him as the King of all kings and He sat down at God’s right hand and took up His reign in the kingdom of God.

I Peter 3:22 “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

But one day, He’ll part the clouds of heaven again and return to receive His church and as He promised His disciples in **John 14:3** He will take us to live with Him in the presence of God. That’s where the footsteps of Jesus lead.

Are you walking in His steps? Have you followed Him through the waters of baptism into the house of worship and are you laboring the fields of service below? Are you gladly and bravely bearing His cross upon your shoulders in hopes of that great day when He will come again and lead you home to the throne of God?

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