

THOUGH NONE GO WITH ME

Don Atkin

www.DonAtkin.com

Here is a recent email:

Just wanted to say how blessed I have been over the past year reading the articles you send. It took awhile to have an understanding of where you are headed, but I continue to see that your passion is for Jesus and for Him to be glorified.

I guess I was also curious as to what kind of reaction you have been getting over the last year? I can surmise its not been an easy path because so many have been ingrained with the wrong paradigm. I could almost imagine its been like trying to push a proverbial elephant up a hill on ice while wearing skates! Anyhow, just wanted to say thanks and keep em coming.¹

Undoubtedly, others are asking the same question. So, I decided to write to you all with a little background. It all began with—much like the song says—*I have decided to follow Jesus*. The closing words of each chorus have become very real to us over the years:

*Though none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back, no turning back.*²

Looking back, and seeing through our memories all those whom we left behind, is among the more painful experiences of our lives. There is a wrestling within the soul every time that a loved one falls behind and finds a familiar and comfortable spot therein to remain. Though I would beckon them to come, they are already distracted and building their own altars.

Some have left us to follow other voices. We have seen God in some of those changes, and we've seen the devil in others. Our hearts have rejoiced when God lifted someone out of our arms and tenderly placed them in other arms. We had fulfilled our responsibilities to them, and the kingdom was being blessed as they moved on in Christ. Our hearts have been broken when someone has been proselytized by the ambitious, or has been ripped off by his/her own carnal appetites.

All I can do is carry this burden to Jesus. He understands. He can be touched by my feelings and comfort my heart. Because He has been thus tempted Himself. John recorded it—*From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*³

There were only two possible responses to the deep things of the Spirit that Jesus was sharing with them in this pre-Pentecostal setting: (1) rejection because of unbelief, or (2) faith and trust in Jesus that was based in the assurance that He was the Son, sent from God. *"Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*⁴

It wasn't that they had grasped the truth of His teaching. It wasn't that they had come to believe and know the words of eternal life. They had *come to believe and know that Jesus was the Anointed One (the Christ), the Son of the living God*. They didn't gather around a doctrine; they gathered around a Man.

¹ An email response to our most recent articles

² "I have decided to follow Jesus" – Attributed to S. Sundar Singh

³ John 6:66

⁴ John 6:67-69

Their knowing His doctrine⁵ would come with time. They had bonded in trust with the spirit of the Man. His words were a testimony to His lifestyle, and also a prophetic seed for their future. He said, *“The good shepherd goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”*⁶

Those who *went back and walked with Him no more* could hear only His natural voice. Perhaps some of them even thought that He was advocating cannibalism? His words were spirit and life. But they had neither the capacity to perceive nor the trust to receive in faith what Jesus was saying. Trust in the Person of Jesus, and faith to store His words for a later time of revelation, marked those who remained with Him as true disciples.

*“Though I may wonder, still I will follow. No turning back. No turning back.”*⁷

There is a price to pay to follow Jesus. Summarily, Jesus said: *“Whichever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”*⁸ Family, position, reputation, material goods, life itself—all that we have must be placed, and left, on the altars of consecration to God and His purpose.

We enjoyed some financially fruitful years as we served churches and their leaders. The leaders faithfully tithed to us to the extent that all of our expenses for travel and ministry were adequately covered, and we enjoyed a modest salary. We depended upon God to provide through the people we served and the system we had believed in. And, He did.

All of that has changed in the past few years. First, we can no longer in good conscience teach tithing as a New Covenant requirement. We can no longer rely upon systems instituted by men. Second, our direction and our priorities are being adjusted. We are investing more and more of our time and energy into developing kingdom relationships on a global scale, and writing materials that encourage the ongoing reformation of the church.

We have lost more than half of our supporters because of these changes. Some dear friends and supporters have passed from this life. Some do not support what we are seeing and saying. Still others have launched out into the next phase of their own developing apostolic and prophetic callings, leaving their salaries behind and following the call of God by faith. We are delighted as they embrace these new phases of their migration. And, we pray that those around them will responsibly take every opportunity to support them.

So, many of our changes are directly tied to kingdom advance. Most of those with whom we now relate are peers with their own financial challenges. These are difficult days in world economy, and great days for us to discover and operate according to God’s economy. We are choosing the path that Paul pioneered, not exercising any rights over the flock of God, but rather giving freely—sowing where we do not reap, and trusting that we will reap where we do not sow.

God is our source and supply, He is with us, will not forsake us, and we are content. We are right back where we were several years ago—trusting God for our every need. It’s one glorious and blessed surprise after another!

We share this with a steadfast confidence that God has our lives are hidden in Christ. We have been crucified with Christ, and His is the life we chose to live.

⁵ John 7:16-18; 2 Timothy 3:10-17

⁶ John 10:4

⁷ “I have decided to follow Jesus”

⁸ Luke 14:33

Those who choose Christ's life will—sooner or later—find themselves leaving people behind in order to follow the Good Shepherd. You can plan on your understanding to grow and change. Hold loosely to what you think you believe today, and those with whom you believe. For, tomorrow is coming; then the next day, month, year and years. Remember that people belong to Him, not to us. He is their head. We are not.

We are being changed into His image. His life is full of vulnerabilities. It is, at the same time, full of God and fruitful. You can plan on being vulnerable to all sorts of changes, including people failing you because they just can't understand you, what you believe, or where you are going.

Serve those who realize that you are a carrier of Jesus' life and life message,⁹ and proceed as He leads. If none go with you, follow still.

We were sent out June 9, 1968, with the laying on of hands by the presbytery, and with the prayers and the encouragement of our local church. A dear lady sang this hymn. It was a prophetic song for us.

*So send I you, to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing . . .
So send I you to toil for Me alone.*

*So send I you to loneliness and longing,
With heart a'hungering for the loved and known,
Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one . . .
So send I you to know My love alone.*

*So send I you to leave your life's ambition,
To die to dear desire, self-will resign,
To labor long and love where men revile you . . .
So send I you to lose your life in mine.*

*So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred,
To eyes made blind because they will not see,
To spend, though it be blood, to spend and spare not . . .
So send I you to taste of Calvary.*

As the Father has sent Me, so send I you.¹⁰

⁹ John 6:64-65

¹⁰ Words by R. Margaret Clarkson; Music by John W. Peterson