

Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON FOLLOWING THE LORD FULLY

True humility is a sweet and blessed grace. It is the product of Almighty power. How calm is the humble soul! While storms and tempests rage with unrelenting fury among the proud and haughty of mankind, a serene and lovely sky smiles over those who are clothed with humility. To promote this desirable state of heart, it is very useful to study those characters on which Infinite Truth has stamped a worth which revolving ages cannot diminish nor impair. Such are Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, David, Daniel, and many others, who shine like stars in the book of God.

We cannot but be struck, while taking this survey, with the blessed testimony which God gave to Caleb; Num. xiv, 24. He is there said to be a man "of another spirit" from the unbelieving Israelites around him; and "to have followed the Lord fully," at a time when the most awful defection took place among the professed people of God.

To follow the Lord fully, is, indeed, a great work; and yet, nothing less than this will bring us to heaven. The work is the Lord's. "By grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The unbelief of the Israelites was their sin, for which they suffered, not being permitted to enter into the promised land.

The faith of Caleb was the gift of God; and his privilege of being favored with a fruitful possession in the land of Canaan, in consequence of it, was of grace and not of debt.

This strictly applies to me in a spiritual sense. Oh! for more self-condemnation and self-abasement, when I see and feel the awful unbelief which dwells in my evil heart. And yet, if I have any reason to hope that the Lord has given me another spirit from the carnal world around me, or from what I once had, and if this new spirit evidences itself by an obedience to his holy command, and a delight in his will, to him be all the undivided praise!

To follow the Lord fully, I must have a lively faith in the promises of God made to me in Jesus Christ; I must experience the love of God shed abroad in my heart through the Holy Spirit given unto me; I must have a good hope through grace, a

hope full of immortality: I must feel the sweet drawings of the Spirit, uniting me closer to Jesus in heart and affection: I must renounce all self-dependence and all creature dependence: I must renounce both my sins and my own supposed righteousness: I must abandon the flattering vanities of the world, and labor to subdue the lusts of the flesh: I must be willing to bear the cross, to deny myself, and to do anything for Christ: I must submit to the righteousness of God; yes, esteem it so inestimably precious, as to count all things else in comparison of it but dung and dross: I must have my will swallowed up in the holy, sovereign will of God: I must lie passive in his hand, while actively engaged in his service, being ever desirous, with childlike simplicity, to do and suffer, at all times and in all places, the will of my heavenly Father. If this be to follow the Lord fully, then, Oh my soul, lie prostrate at his feet in shame and confusion of face.

God will not accept of a divided heart. To follow him fully, I must follow him only. The language of the church is: "Other lords besides you have had dominion over me; but by you only, will I make mention of your name." "Whom have I in heaven but you, and there is none upon earth I desire besides you." "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." Oh that this may be the language of my heart! I can never know true peace, until Jesus reign the unrivaled Sovereign of my affections. Blessed Savior! be my only Savior. Let me not trust in any thing but you. Let me love nothing but you, or for your sake. May I love you supremely, and love all your people, because they belong to you.

To follow the Lord fully, I must follow him at all times; not only when the sun shines, but when the tempest comes. This often puts faith and love to the severest trial, when the line of duty runs through rugged paths and hostile foes. Yet, if I draw back in the day of trouble, I cannot follow the Lord fully. I must not choose my path, but "run with patience the race which is set before me." I must still keep in the narrow way, however few there be who walk in it, or however unfashionable this path may be among the rich and learned of the earth; ever remembering that the promise of eternal life is made to those only who are found in the King's highway of holiness. If through fear of man, or love of ease, I deviate into bye-paths and crooked ways, to avoid the difficulties of the road, I shall assuredly find them multiply upon me, without one sustaining promise; for, thus says the Lord, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

To follow the Lord fully, I must confess him with courage and constancy before an unbelieving world. A cowardly believer dishonors his heavenly King, and betrays the cause of truth. I say a cowardly believer; for such was Peter when left to himself. Caleb was "valiant for the truth." He believed in God, and dared to confess his faith and allegiance in the face of the whole congregation, when "they would stone him with stones," like another Stephen. Thus he experienced the blessedness of this divine declaration: "Those who honor me, I will honor."

But, through the deceitfulness of sin, I am in danger of falling into two extremes—vain-glory, and the fear of man. Our beloved Redeemer, however, has given me

an exact direction how to avoid both these evils. "Take heed that you do not give your alms before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father who is in heaven." "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." By observing the first precept, I shall avoid vain-glory, which is the evil forbidden; by observing the second, I shall maintain a holy courage in exhibiting the power of godliness to the glory of God, which is the duty enjoined.

To follow the Lord fully, I must cleave to him in seasons of general defection. Here Caleb proved that he was a man of another spirit from those around him, by cleaving steadfastly to God. Thus did the apostles, when, on many forsaking Jesus, he said to them, "And will you also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life."

This entire surrender of the heart to God, is the work of the Spirit; for "a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Nothing short of this will bring us to glory. Nothing short of this can give true assurance, peace, and joy. I can never taste the real comforts of religion, until I follow the Lord fully. It is the lack of this undivided state of heart, which causes so much unsteadiness in the walk, and so much uncomfortableness in the experience of many professors; who, separating what God has joined together, maintain with warmth the high doctrines of grace, while they esteem of small importance the social and relative duties of the Gospel. Such people seem to forget, that "to be really holy, is to be relatively holy;" and that no truth can do us any personal good, but as it influences and purifies our heart and life. What can we think of those professors, who, while they appear saints abroad, are fiends at home? Can it be a matter of surprise, that they should feel no real satisfaction either in religion or in the world? They profess so much religion, as to render them the objects of the world's derision; and yet, they possess too little of its power to enable them to taste the sweets of genuine piety. Hence, they grow morose in their temper, and uncharitable in their spirit. They are quick-sighted in discovering the mote in a brother's eye, while utter strangers to the beam in their own. They are spots and blemishes in the visible church, and verify the declaration of the prophet: "there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked."

But how great is the happiness of the true follower of Jesus! His sins are blotted out. His soul is beautified with salvation. He has no double aims. All his intentions are simple and single; his one desire is to promote the glory of his God and Savior. His heart is the abode of peace. His house the dwelling-place of joy and gladness. He has his conflicts, and he has his comforts. He has his sorrow, and he has his support. God is his Father. Angels minister to him, and all things work together for his good. He may be hated of men, but he is beloved of God. He may have to pass through deep waters, but underneath are the everlasting arms. He may often groan, being burdened; but in heaven all his tears shall be wiped away. He shall there follow the Lamb wherever he goes. He shall there

experience the eternal blessedness of that glorious promise: "He that overcomes, shall inherit all things: I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Oh blessed Redeemer, fill my soul
With love and grace divine;
Subdue the power of every sin,
And make me wholly thine.

In you, oh Christ, may I be found
From every blemish free;
Though vile and worthless in myself,
Yet all complete in thee.

Oh, send your Holy Spirit, Lord,
In larger portions down,
To witness with my waiting heart,
And seal me for your own.

May holiness my life adorn;
May all my soul be love;
May every wish be formed by you,
And placed on things above.

Thus will a holy evidence
Confirm that I am thine;
And faith, by works made manifest,
Shall prove the work divine.

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