

## **Faith, Followers, and Failures – Why Become a Follower?** **By Phil Brainerd**

### **Introduction**

Life is full of questions. Sometimes, we're happy to accept things as they are. Other times, we like to know a little more. So we ask the famous question, "Why?"

We're continuing our series, "Faith, Followers, and Failures." We're following Jesus as he spoke to different groups of people. And we're looking at the reactions of different groups. Some had faith, and they followed. Others lacked faith, and they failed.

In this article, we're going to watch as Jesus gives an answer to the question, "Why?" He's going to give us a number of reasons why people would want to follow him.



Let's read:

15 Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. 16 He warned them not to tell others about him. (Matthew 12:15-16)

What's going on here? Matthew starts by saying, "Aware of this..." What's Jesus aware of? In the last article, we learned that Jesus confronted the religious leaders in their synagogue. They created a massive book of rules and expected everyone to follow. Jesus showed everyone that these rules were illogical and had nothing to do with true faith or the Scriptures. When he did this, he embarrassed them. Instead of listening to Jesus, the leaders plotted to kill him.

Did Jesus or someone on his side overhear them talking? Perhaps. In another place we're told that Jesus knew the hearts of all men. Either way, he chose to avoid conflict at this time. Why? Matthew will tell us in a minute. For now let's look at what happened next.

A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. He warned them not to tell others about him.

### **Jesus rewards his followers**

So, we're looking at a group of followers. Right away, Matthew gives us an important reason to follow Jesus. Why follow Jesus? Because Jesus rewards those who follow him.

The rewards may take different forms. In those days, Jesus healed people who were sick. Today, we don't see the kind of miraculous healings that Jesus performed on a regular basis. However, we see other kinds of healing. Over the years, I have heard numerous stories of Jesus healing broken lives. He may not do it in an instant, but if you follow Jesus, lots of times things in your life begin to heal. And of course, there is the guarantee of eternal life to all who become true followers of Jesus.

If that is not reason enough to follow Jesus, Matthew tells us more.

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: (Matthew 12:17)

Matthew is about to quote a Messianic prophecy. This comes up constantly in Matthew's book. We've spoken about Messianic Prophecy on a number of occasions, so let me just highlight the main reasons it's important:

***Messianic Prophecy shows us the power of God.*** Isaiah lived over 600 years before the time of Christ. Only God can tell a prophet to say something, and then make it come to pass centuries later. In order to do this, God must have immense power over the universe.

Why do we care about God's power? Because God is powerful, we can trust him. The next time you face a problem, ask yourself: Is God powerful enough to help me with my problem?

***Messianic Prophecy gives us evidence for our faith.*** Of all the religious leaders over the ages, only Jesus was predicted. The Buddha was not predicted. Mohammad was not predicted. Only Jesus was predicted. More than that, there are hundreds of predictions about him in the Old Testament of the Bible. Many religions tell people to believe in their leaders and their books. Only Christianity and the Bible give us evidence.

### **God the Father chose Jesus**

In this case, what did the prophet Isaiah predict about Jesus? And why does it give us reasons to follow him? Let's read

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight;  
(Matthew 12:18(a))

Why follow Jesus? Because God the Father chose him. Can I see the hands of all the people who are smarter than God the Father?

## ***Jesus is a servant***

Let's look at what God the Father says about his Son, Jesus. "Here is my servant..." Jesus is a servant. Previously we read that Jesus healed people. Then we read something unusual: He told the people he healed not to tell anyone. Why would he do that? Because he's not healing people to put on a show. He's healing people because he is a servant. He's serving people because he cares about them. He's serving people because that's who he is.

In this passage though, Jesus is more than a servant. The word used for "servant" here is used only once in the entire New Testament. It's a special word - It means "Most trusted servant".

Think about that: This is the infinite God. The sovereign God – the king of the universe. The all-powerful God. And yet, he wants to serve people.

Did you know that God wants to serve you? He wants to serve you so much that he sent his most trusted servant, his Son, Jesus. He loves Jesus. He delights in Jesus. And he sent Jesus to us.

Now, note: Service does not mean "bring me dinner – NOW!". Jesus is not a lacky. He is not a butler. Service means God giving us what he thinks we need. God the Father sent his Son to serve us. More than anything else, that meant dying for us.

Why follow Jesus? Because he and his Father love you. They love you so much, Jesus was willing to die for you.

What else did Isaiah say?

## **The Holy Spirit and Justice**

I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. (Matthew 12:18(b))

Why follow Jesus? Because he is the source of true Justice.

God the Father will put his Spirit on Jesus. Now, Jesus is a member of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Before he came to the earth, Jesus had full access to the Spirit. So, why does God the Father have to do what's written here?

This is another repeated theme. Jesus chose to live as a human. In doing this he chose to follow the rules that humans are required to follow. So, if Jesus needed power, he had to rely on the power of the Spirit in the same way that we humans do.

How do we get the power of the Spirit? Ask!

11 “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11-13)

Do you want the power of the Spirit? Ask! Then, have faith that God is good. And he wants to give good gifts to his children.

Now, like healing, this doesn't happen the same way it happened in the days of Jesus. Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven, there was the day of Pentecost. On that day, we're told that the Spirit fell with the sound of a mighty wind and with flames of fire. Today, the work of the Spirit is often a more subtle thing. The Spirit teaches us and guides us. He comes along side of us and gives us strength to face the challenges of each day.

Do you want that in your life? Ask! Then, believe.

The Spirit does many things. Here we learn that he empowered Jesus to proclaim justice to the nations. Justice is a complex topic, so we'll have to oversimplify it. For now, we'll say that there is worldly justice, and there's biblical justice. Let's give a definition of biblical justice.

*Biblical justice involves payment being made when someone is wronged.*

But here's something very important: Biblical justice starts with us. How is that? We have sinned against God. Here's what King David said in the psalms:

1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.  
2 Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
4 Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.  
(Psalm 51:1-6)

David said that he sinned. That means he committed wrongs against God. Biblical justice demands that a price be paid for our sin. We cannot pay that price by ourselves. That's why it's so important the Jesus died in our place to pay for our sins. The justice of God is satisfied on the cross of Christ.

Worldly justice is different. Worldly justice is very seductive because it also talks about wrongs being paid for. However, it's very different than biblical justice. Biblical justice says I must start with me and the wrongs I have done to God and others. Worldly justice says I must start with **everyone else**. Everyone else has wronged someone and everyone else must be made to pay. For some, worldly justice says people have wronged me or someone I care about, so they must be made to pay **me**.

Sadly, the weight of the world's sins is so great that they can never be paid by any human effort. And so, the quest to make everyone else pay will go on until the day the Lord returns to bring final justice on the earth. It's never ending. True justice, the justice of God only comes when we recognize our sin. It starts when we repent of our sins.

We said that the Spirit gave Jesus the power to proclaim this justice. You will never know the power of the Spirit until you know the justice that the Spirit proclaims. You will never know the power of the Spirit until you recognize your own sin. Sin is not what everyone else does. Sin is what I do. Sin what you do.

Why follow Jesus? Because he is the source of true, godly justice.

### **Jesus wins people over with kindness**

Why else should people follow Jesus? Because Jesus wins people over with kindness.

19 He will not quarrel or cry out;  
no one will hear his voice in the streets.  
20 A bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,  
till he has brought justice through to victory.  
(Matthew 12:19-20)

Let's take this apart. First, "He will not quarrel..." The language here indicates someone that likes to get into arguments. They like getting into fights. Do you know anyone like that? Do you like being around them?

Earlier we learned that the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus. What did he do? He left. He didn't sit around asking for trouble. He might as well have said, "If you want to follow me, great. If you want to hate me, do it on your own time - I'm too busy helping people." And plenty of people thought that was just fine.

Jesus wins people over with kindness, not arguments. He's happy to reason with people and answer their questions. But get into fights, no.

Next, we're told he will not cry out (v 19). This has the connotation of being loud and abrasive. Again, do you know loud and abrasive people. Do you like being around them? I didn't think so. Isaiah then expands on the idea by saying, "...no one will hear his voice in the streets." We get a picture here of an annoying person yelling on the street corner.

I had a friend who was a pastor in the city of Philadelphia. One day, he was driving along, and he saw a man standing on a street corner with a bull horn. Across the street were some young people. My friend watched for a couple of minutes, and he thought to himself, "Why not put down the bullhorn and just walk over to the kids and talk with them?"

Some people like bullhorns. Jesus does not. He does not win people over by being louder than the next guy. He wins people over with kindness.

Next, "A bruised reed he will not break..." Reeds were used for all kinds of things in the ancient world. One use was a walking stick or a cane. These were very useful. However, reeds have a problem: If they get bent, or bruised, you might not know it. Then, if you tried to use it, it could break. When it did, you'd get splinters in your hand. So, anytime you used a reed for a cane, you had to give it a quick look over. If it was damaged in any way, you threw it out. Reeds were cheap, why risk hurting yourself?

Jesus says that people are like those reeds. Sometimes, people are broken. Their lives can be a real mess. Society throws out people like that. Not Jesus. Why not - Because he is kind.

If someone wants to follow Jesus, he can tolerate all kinds of failures. Sometimes, people failed Jesus in ways that hurt him. Just like a broken reed can put splinters into your hand. When that happened, Jesus forgave them. Again, because he is kind.

Smoldering wicks are similar. Jesus says that he will not snuff out a smoldering wick. In those days, most people lit their homes with an oil lamp. To make an oil lamp, you take a small bowl, and you put a piece of fabric in it - That's the wick. You put some oil in, light the end of the wick, and you're ready to go.

Oil lamps should produce light. Every now and then however, a wick would have a problem. If that happened, instead of nice light, you got a lot of fowl-smelling smoke. So, the user would just snuff the light out and start with a new wick.

Some people are like that oil lamp. Something goes wrong. Instead of adding good to the world, those people add bad things. Instead of being helpful, they're a burden. Society throws those people away. Not Jesus. Why not? Because he is kind. He puts up with all kinds of nonsense

from his followers. Does he put up with nonsense from us? Perhaps that's something to think about...

He will do these things "...till he has brought justice through to victory. (v 20(b))" Sadly, justice doesn't just spread all by itself - It needs help. Jesus will bring justice to victory. He could do that himself, but instead, he is building an army. Is this an army of elite specialists? No. This is an army of broken people - People who understand the kindness and grace of God. People who are willing to follow Jesus.

Why follow Jesus? *Because he wins people over with kindness.*

### **Jesus gives hope to all people.**

Finally, why follow Jesus? Because he gives all people hope.

In his name the nations will put their hope. (Matthew 12:21)

This statement has three parts. First, "In his name..." Hope is in the name of Jesus. It's not "hope for hope's sake." There is no true hope in any other name.

Next, "...the nations..." That means all people - Everyone is welcome. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you come from. Everyone is welcome in the kingdom of God.

Third, "...will put their hope." If you've been here for any length of time, you know that hope in the Bible is not the same as human hope. Human hope says, "I hope it won't rain." Biblical hope is more like assurance or trust. All the people in the world are invited to come to Jesus and put their trust in him.

Let's pull this all together.

### **Conclusion**

Why follow Jesus? There are lots of reasons.

Jesus rewards those who follow him. He brings healing to their lives. He assures his followers a place in heaven for all eternity.

Follow him because God showed his power through messianic prophecy. The ancient prophets predicted Jesus, and he came right on schedule. Because God is powerful, we can trust him.

Those messianic prophecies provide evidence for faith. No other religion gives evidence like this.

Follow Jesus because God the Father chose him. If you're smarter than God the father, let me know.

Jesus came to the earth to serve us. The ultimate service was to die for us.

Follow Jesus because the Spirit helps him to bring true justice. God offers his Spirit to any who are willing to repent of their sin.

Follow Jesus because he wins people over with kindness.

- He doesn't win them with arguments.
- He doesn't yell from across the street.
- He doesn't throw people out because they're broken.
- Instead, he forgives them and heals them.

Jesus is building an army of broken people to help him bring justice to victory. Will you be part of the massive army of people from every place on earth who have put their hope and trust in him? If you want to follow Jesus, let us tell you how. If you're already a follower, and you want more, talk to us. There will be important information at the end of this article.

Become a follower of Jesus today. You'll be glad you did.

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Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church  
[TrinityTeaneck.org](http://TrinityTeaneck.org)

Phil's Site  
[PhilBrainerd.com](http://PhilBrainerd.com)

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:  
[PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net)