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## "I Will Follow Thee, Lord; But..."

by T. Austin-Sparks

*First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Jan-Feb 1949, Vol. 27-1.*

*"Another said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first..." (Luke 9:61).*

There was a lot of "following" going on just at that time. A glance at the concordance will show how often the word "follow" occurs. In the movement, this man made his spontaneous announcement to the Lord. His proviso or reservation was the point which drew forth the famous statement of which such wide use has been made. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." What the Lord meant by unfitness was having a But. How many of us have been caught, or nearly caught, in the trammels of a But! It is sometimes an "If" or an "If only." It would be easy to follow or serve the Lord *if only...* 'Lord, *if only* you would remove this difficulty, this painful factor; *if only* you would change my place or put me somewhere else; *if only* you would do this for me, or give me that; then - well, I would do so much more for you.'

This lack of enthusiasm on the part of Christ over people making gestures has more in it than the single instance indicates. In the light of all that we now know, we can see several things.

Firstly, we cannot follow the Lord on our own initiative, anyway. Unless there is the dynamic imparted by His personal call, we shall never get very far with it. There were several instances - notably Peter's - of unsolicited declarations as to following Him, and He was most discouraging in every case, and on one occasion at least would not allow it. But, if the Lord calls us, it is refusing Divine power if we do not obey. Let us not think that we can do as we like about this, and *when* we like. It is His like, or it is nothing.

Then, for us to bargain with the Lord on the matter by having a But, an If, or any kind of a proviso, is to prove ourselves unfit because we have failed to see that this matter is so utter, so desperate, so

eternally immense and vital as to allow of no second considerations. It is all a matter of love, not doing the Lord a favour, or ourselves a good turn.