

WCCC 2017

Follow the Lamb (2)

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Revelation 14:1, 4-5 *Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.*

These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

Acts 5:30-31 *'The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus, whom you have slain, having hanged on a cross. Him has God exalted by His right hand as leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins'.*

I want brothers and sisters to pay attention to 'as leader and Savior'. God sent Him to be leader so we have to follow Him. Leader in English is easy, it is leader. In Chinese it means someone who leads us. The verses that we are going to read deal with how we should follow the Lord. This one is the Apostle Paul speaking to Timothy. He was telling Timothy to follow him closely. We remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11 'Follow me as I follow Christ'. What Paul was telling Timothy was how he should follow Christ.

2 Timothy 3:10-11a *Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings.*

2 Timothy 1:13 *Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

This again was Paul talking to Timothy. Paul was telling Timothy to read the Bible and to read the Bible carefully, particularly something in the Bible.

Isaiah 60:15 *Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride; a joy from generation to generation.*

This was the Lord Jehovah speaking. He was talking about Jerusalem.

Isaiah 62:6-7 *On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You, who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

This was actually the Servant of the Lord talking.

Isaiah 65:8 *Thus says the Lord, 'As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, 'Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it', so I will act on behalf of My servants in order not to destroy all of them.'*

This was the Lord Jehovah speaking.

Isaiah 66:1-2 *Thus says the Lord, 'Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things. Thus all these things came into being', declares the Lord. 'But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.'*

This again was the Lord Jehovah speaking. I want to point out at the end of the first verse, the Lord Jehovah asked the question, 'Where is the place of My rest?' He found no place to rest. Then He said, 'To this man I will look, to the afflicted and contrite in spirit and to those who trembles at my word'. In other words in this one He finds the place to rest.

Let us pray:

Dear heavenly Father, we thank You that we can come into Your presence. We know Your heart is burdened to speak to us. Lord, our time is very short this session. But Lord we pray Your face will shine towards us and Your Spirit will set us free. Lord I pray that you will go beyond the weakness and inadequacies of me and my brother and you speak to our hearts. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot go back to review what we shared last time. But this picture on Mount Zion gives us a very clear impression. God actually has wonderful intention and provision for us. What God thinks most important to Him is that His Son, the Lamb will stand on Mount Zion with you and me in victory. This is His intention.

He also gives us the provision to make that happen. Now He has given the Lamb, His Son, to us, not only as our Savior but also as our Leader so that He can lead us onward until we can stand there with Him on Mount Zion. Our Lord is very practical. He actually prepares and gives us everything to achieve that goal. God has called us to follow the Lord Jesus not according to our works but according to His grace and His purpose.

2 Timothy 1 said that He has given us this purpose and grace 'in Christ Jesus before the ages of time'. Now if He called us according to our works, I for one will not be qualified. But we are called according to His own purpose. That shows that no matter how much of a failure I was in the past and no matter how weak I was in the past, He called me according to His own purpose. He also called me according to His grace. What does that mean? He can pull me up from the pit even though I was so poor and so weak. He can lead me forward. He can give me all the strength to follow Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is a wonder. Being called to follow the Lamb is not according to you and is not according to me. It is not according to our past. It is according to His own purpose. It is according to His own grace. So praise the Lord.

The most wonderful thing is that He had thought this out in ages and in eternity past. Dear brothers and sisters, having the Lamb to follow is the most precious possession in our lives. Dear brothers and sisters, when we are young, we are with our parents. One day we leave our dad and mom to go to college. We cannot be with dad and mom. But we have the Lamb to follow. One day we get married. In order for the marriage to be a blessing, we both have to follow the Lamb. If we do not follow the Lamb, we will not have a good marriage. Finally, when we get old, one of us will leave to see the Lord first. You feel sad, even the one who is leaving feels sad. But the one who is left behind, he or she has the Lamb to follow. The Lamb never leaves us. We thank God for the Lamb. Dear brothers and sisters, there is something more important. The Lamb actually opens up for us the meaning and purpose of our lives. Not only that, He leads us to fulfill that meaning and that purpose.

In my junior high and high school years, I always had a question. What is the purpose of my life? Why do I live? Who do I have to live for? I could not find the answer. When I went to college, I asked the same question. And there was no answer. It was very painful. I thought it was just me. Now when I grew older, I found that a lot of young people have the same question, same agony, and same pain. Especially these days, when we look around us, the honesty, mercy, and righteousness seem to worth nothing. Self-benefit, money and winning seem to be everything. For a young heart this is very disheartening. What is the meaning of this life? What is the purpose of my life?

In my case, the turning point came when the Lord Jesus met me. I found He has that pure and noble purpose I was looking for. Years went on and He never ceases to open my eyes. He never ceases to warm my heart. He never ceases to give me strength to move on with Him. He took my pain away.

Dear brothers and sisters, especially young brothers and sisters, this question must have also bothered you. But you and I actually have something wonderful. God has provided for us the Lamb to follow. He is not only our Savior but He is our Leader. If we think it through, the Lamb's way is the best way. If we follow the Lamb, we do not have to be selfish anymore. Now if we follow the Lamb, we can be free to think for others. We can care for the poor and the needy. We can serve the purpose of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, those are the things that vibrate in our hearts. They resonate in our hearts. This is the true value of our life. When we see that, we realize that following the Lamb is not a requirement imposed upon us. It is actually our blessing. It is actually a precious thing. So having the Lamb to follow is the most precious possession. Yes, the most precious possession we can have in this life.

What should we do then if we want to follow the Lamb? Now brothers and sisters, I think I will summarize a few things for you. I think we should drop one thing and take up three things. We need to throw away something. We need to throw away any bondage that entangles us. We have to pick up three things. The first thing is a very close relationship with the Lamb. The second thing is an ever-

deepening knowledge of Him. The third thing is a wholehearted identification with His purpose.

Brothers and sisters, the reason is that when we follow the Lamb it is not just today, not just this year, not just the next ten years. It is a whole life. So that is why these things to me are very important. First of all, we have to drop all burdens and all bondages. When the Lord Jesus was walking on the earth, anyone who sincerely came to Him, He would take away that bondage from him. Sin is a bondage. For example, to this woman who was caught in adultery in John 8, the Lord Jesus said, 'Did no one condemn you? I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more'. This set her free. Another bondage is weakness. It has nothing to do with sin. There was this woman who had been losing blood for twelve years. She came to the Lord and touched the end of His garment and the blood stopped. The Lord Jesus told her, 'Your faith has saved you'.

Another bondage is blindness. We remember this man in John 9. He was blind since he was born. This had nothing to do with sin. He could not see. The Lord Jesus came and opened his eyes and not only his physical eyes because this man saw salvation. That was wonderful. Also the Lord Jesus came to set us free from the religious traditions. This Samaritan woman in John 4 was very smart. She said, 'Our ancestor worshipped on this mountain but you Jews worship in Jerusalem'. The Lord Jesus said, 'The time has come and now it is. Those who worship God worship in spirit and in truth'. The Lord Jesus set her free. She threw away her bucket and went to the village proclaiming 'I have seen the Messiah'.

The worst bondage of all is ourselves. The hardest thing is ourselves. Peter said to the Lord, 'Lord this thing will not happen to You'. The Lord Jesus said, 'Satan get behind Me. Anyone who wants to follow Me has to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me'. Dear brothers and sisters, our Lord set everyone free. He sets everybody free for a purpose; so we can be free to follow Him. So brothers and sisters, I leave that with you. Drop anything that becomes our bondage so we can follow the Lord.

The first thing we have to take up is a close relationship with the Lord. The apostle Peter saw the Lord Jesus in a special way. In 2 Peter, he said, 'The Lord called us by His glory and virtue'. He had a brother by the name of Andrew. The very first time the Lord saw Andrew and another one of John the Baptist's disciples, they followed the Lord. The Lord Jesus said, 'Come and see'. They stayed with Jesus one night. The second day he went to tell his brother, 'We have seen the Messiah'. If you allow the Lord Jesus to come to your life, just one night, you will be changed; you will see He is indeed glory and virtue.

Peter in his life was weak several times. He failed several times. But the Lord Jesus came to him. It was not that he went to Jesus. It was Jesus who came to him. These things he could not forget. So finally, when he wrote his books, there is a word that shows up again and again. It is the word 'precious'. You do not see that in other books. You see that again and again in his books. When he talked about the blood of Jesus, he said 'this is the precious blood of Jesus'. When he talked about the promise of the Lord Jesus, he said 'this is precious promise'. When he talked about the faith in the Lord Jesus, he called it 'precious faith'. When he talked about the Lord Jesus the Person, he said 'He is precious'.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus does not mind if we look at Him. He does not mind if we examine Him. He does not mind if we walk very close to Him. If we follow Him more closely, then we see more of His glory and virtue and His love.

In Psalm 23, David said 'Your staff and Your rod they comfort me'. Brothers and sisters, I did not quite understand what that means. But then I realize it has at least one meaning. David was very close to the Lord, very close to the Shepherd. He was just one staff away from the Shepherd. He was not far away. He was very, very close. If the Shepherd wanted to guide him, the Shepherd could easily do that. If the Shepherd wanted to discipline him, He could easily do that. No matter what, David was so happy. 'Your rod and Your staff they comfort Me'. Yesterday we read David had a psalm. He did not want anything to get between him and the Lord. It is worthwhile for us to think 'am I walking or standing very close to Him or am I far away'? He is so very loving. He is so very forgiving. His eyes are always on you even if you are far away. So brothers and sisters, we need to get very close to Him.

When the apostle Paul was talking to Timothy, he said, 'You have to follow me in these following things'. Another translation says follow closely. As we read before, Paul did not mean to tell Timothy to follow him, but he meant Timothy should follow Christ. Paul had said previously, 'You follow Me as I follow Christ'. The importance of this 'following' is that it is a very practical thing. Essentially it enters every aspect of your life. To follow closely means that His teaching, His conduct, His purpose, His faith and His love are in every aspect of my life.

Teaching - Do I understand the Bible the way the Lord Jesus wants me to understand?

Conduct - is the Lord Jesus' life in my daily walk? Is His life actually in the way I live, I walk, I work? How am I as a person and how do I walk? Is Christ in it? When other people see me, do they see something noble, something of God there?

Purpose - this is very practical. Is the purpose of the Lamb my purpose also?

I will leave that matter to you. Brothers and sisters, be very close to Him. If in the past for whatever reason we were very far from Him, now we really have to get close to Him. We have very limited life on earth. We have to find this very urgent. Be close to Him. This morning our brother said our Lord can come back any moment. I do not see that as something that scares us. I see that as a reminder that our time is very limited. We cannot be careless. We have to get very close to the Lord Jesus.

The second thing we have to take up is a deepening knowledge of the Lord. We do not want to go to the end of our life, turn back and find out we do not really know Him. When the apostle John was almost ninety years old, he had known the Lord Jesus more than anyone else. At that time on the island of Patmos, the Lord appeared to Him. He fell down. He now started to know the Lord like never before. He is the beginning. He is the end. He is the Living One. As we grow, we still think we have not known Him enough. Even when you come to ninety years old, you are still going to see Him as something you have not known before. The apostle Paul in Philippians 3 said 'that I may know Him'. It was as if he had not known Him enough. At that time he had already written most of his epistles. Dear brothers and sisters, let the Lord give us zeal to know Him. Now when Paul knew Christ, it was not a theory at all. He said 'I may know Him and the power of

His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering, and to be conformed to His death'. So to know Christ is very practical. It has to do with resurrection. It has to do with fellowshiping in His suffering. If we are not willing to suffer with Christ, then we will never know Him. If we are not willing to be conformed a little bit to His death, then we will never know Him. Dear brothers and sisters, to know Him is an experience.

It is very interesting that Paul told Timothy, 'You have to have a pattern of sound words'. He did not tell Timothy 'You should know the word of God'. Of course we need to know the word of God. But he wanted Timothy to know the pattern. You have to have that.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is a challenge for us. It is not enough to just remember the Bible. You have to know the pattern. What is the pattern? The pattern is the central thought that underlines the whole thing. There is Old Testament. There is New Testament. But then there is a central thought that underlines the whole thing. Also it is an outline, a framework. It is like a building. Before the building is built, there are frameworks, there is inside and outside. The pattern is the weight of the whole thing.

For example, we have these Moses books. We have the Law, the tabernacle, and the sacrifices. Now they were given in details to guide the Israelites at that time. But Hebrews 3 said something very interesting. Hebrews 3:5 said, '*Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later*'. Moses did all these things according to God's word. But Hebrews said Moses did all these for a testimony of things that will be spoken later. These five books together carry a central thought. They carry an outline. They carry a weight. What is the central thought? What is this outline? What is this weight? This weight, this central thought, is Someone who would come in the future. It is His Person and His work. That is our Lord Jesus Christ. As Hebrews 3:6 said, 'Christ was faithful as a Son over His house'. That is what Moses' work was trying to point to.

Dear brothers and sisters, the pattern is the Lord Jesus. So every time when we read the Bible, do not think of what God has to say as bits and pieces. But know

that God has something to say. He has a central thought. He has an outline. He has a theme. Brothers and sisters, as time goes on, we see clearer and clearer that it is our Lord Jesus Christ. So we cannot stop. We cannot say we know it all. Let us be humble and be aggressive. Know Him.

Remember what we said about Moses yesterday. He really wanted to know God. He really wanted to know God's ways. He really wanted to know what God thinks. May the Lord give us that yearning and that zeal! How do we get this pattern? I just have a couple of thoughts. When we were young, we were so busy with a lot of schoolwork. We thought the Bible is so thick and so complex; especially the Old Testament with so many different things and chapters. Brothers and sisters, it is a matter of the heart. If you like it, it is not too thick.

I remember my grandson. When he was very young, someone gave him a book, Star Wars. He could tell me Luke Skywalker and his dad and his other generation. He knew the whole genealogy. Today some brothers and sisters watch this drama. There is a prequel and sequel. There are altogether forty-fifty sequences. If you have no problem watching those things and remembering them and telling them in details, then you have no problem telling the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah and Jeremiah. Brothers and sisters, have a love for the word of God. It is not a problem. It is all a matter of the heart.

Now when Paul talked about telling Timothy to have this pattern, the second part of the sentence said, 'in the faith and love that is in Christ'. So the first method of having this pattern is faith and love. It is not that you memorize this. It is faith and love. I have to let this subject go.

The third thing we have to take up is to identify wholeheartedly with the purpose of the Lamb. Dear brothers and sisters, what is the purpose of the Lamb? The Lamb, Christ Jesus said, 'On this rock I will build My church'. That is His purpose. All these are in Matthew 16. Now the rock is the confession of Peter. 'You are the Christ; the Son of the living God'. The Lord Jesus said, 'On this rock I will build My church'. It is not your church, my church, or our church. It is His church. Christ and His church is His purpose.

In Ephesians and Colossians, the apostle Paul described that purpose very clearly and in full detail. We think this is just our Lord Jesus and Paul. But these people Abraham, Moses, and David in 2000 – 1000BC already saw that purpose even though at a distance. Seven hundred years before Christ, Isaiah saw that purpose with amazing clarity and in detail. Not only that, he also saw people who wholeheartedly identify with that purpose. He painted the picture from the point of view of that time. That is the book of Isaiah. What he painted in that picture directly applies to you and me today.

One view of the picture is in Isaiah 60:14. There he said, ‘The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you. And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet. And they will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel’. So the Lord said one day this Jerusalem will become an eternal excellence, a joy from generation to generation.

Dear brothers and sisters, this was the picture at that time. It applies to us today. The Lord wants His church to be eternal excellence, a joy from generation to generation. Brothers and sisters, it is hard for us to believe but this is exactly what He wants. He wants this eternal excellence and joy from generation to generation at every place we meet. Eternal excellence means when other people sees it they will praise it. Joy from generation to generation means our children, our children's children, our children's children's children will have that joy.

What is the key of making the church the eternal excellence? The key is that Jesus has to be the head. Christ has to be the head. In Colossians 2, it said ‘hold fast the head’. Why do we need to hold fast the head? It is because from Him flows all the blessing. From Him we can grow and increase with the increase of God. Only He is the excellence. When God sees Him, He is the excellence. When the world sees Him, He is the excellence. When His life flows down to us, then we are the excellence.

Then there is joy from generation to generation. When you and I go to the meeting why do we have joy? It is because our Lord is our life. He is also our joy. He has given us His joy. Why can our children be joyful? When they come to the church, they feel something very, very warm, something good, something forgiving. All the young kids have problems coming to the church because we blame them too

much. But if the life of Christ is here, the joy of Christ is here, they feel the difference. They come to the presence of the Lord and to the house of God and to the body of Christ. They have joy. Then they teach their kids the joy of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters what Isaiah saw is very practical. The Lord wants nothing less than that. Jerusalem is the current condition of the church. But Zion is what God wants. There is the throne of God there. There are faithful, joyful people in Zion. So brothers and sisters, you and I feel we are at Jerusalem. But thank the Lord we aim for Zion. Now Isaiah went on to say a few things we mentioned yesterday. One thing he said was oaks of righteousness. They who mourn in Zion, the Lord will make them the trees of righteousness. Brothers and sisters, when we talk about testimony, what does that mean? That means every single one of us is to be the tree of righteousness. This tree is not something pulled from the sky and planted there. The tree is grown. It is planted by God. It has a purpose. The purpose is for His glory.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is what we are to be. When we serve, what do we serve? Preaching is not important. Leading hymns is not important. Leading this or leading that is not important. The importance is to help your brothers and sisters on your right or left to be that tree of righteousness. Everyone can engage in that service. We ask the Lord to help each one of us to be that tree of righteousness. May the Lord also help me to help my brother and sister to be the tree of righteousness.

The second thing that Isaiah said was these people who set on the wall of Jerusalem. They will not cease praying. They will not let God stop until God makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth. That is when people see God's church, when people see Lord Jesus' church, when people see wherever you meet and wherever I meet, they will have praise. They may not know much but they see something very different. They have a sense that God is there. They have a sense of something called glory and virtue. They even have a sense there is a purpose of God there. Dear brothers and sisters, this is what we call the testimony. Testimony is not when we do this or do that. Testimony is when we cry out to the Lord and let Him work. Let Him work in me. Let Him work in you until Jerusalem becomes a place of praise.

The third thing that Isaiah's picture shows us is that there is a group of people called 'the new wine in the cluster'. These people are servants. They have a life. They have been following this Lamb. The life of the Lamb is in them. This fragrance of the life of the Lamb is in them. So when they get together, they satisfy the heart of God. The fragrance goes to God. The fragrance encourages themselves and others as well.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is completely doable. If today we follow the Lord, let His life govern us. Let Him become so real in us that He is our life. Then the fragrance comes up. When God sees us, He is so happy. When God sees us, He sees one day the church will mature. When God sees us, He knows other people can be affected. This will be such a wonderful thing. This is so doable today. When we go home, or when we go to the meeting, or when we go among our brothers and sisters, may we be a tree of righteousness. May we be prayers on the walls of Jerusalem. We will not let the Lord rest until He makes Jerusalem a praise. When we go back, we carry the life of the Lord. When we go back, we serve as our Lord Jesus served. We serve like He served. However He forgives, that is how we forgive. However He works day and night, that is how we work day and night. Thank the Lord for that.

Finally, Isaiah gave us a picture that the Lord God is always trying to find a place to rest. Heaven is My seat. The earth is My footstool. Where can I find My place to rest? Among those I find, they are lowly; they are broken spirit; they tremble at My word. These are the people where God can find rest. Dear brothers and sisters, may we be that group of people. Sometimes following the Lord is very hard. Thank the Lord Jesus because He already said He is our resurrection and our life. In our fellowship there is a sister. She said, 'It is so hard. But then I remember the resurrection is not for the future but the resurrection is for today'. Thank the Lord she rose up. Following the Lord is sometimes difficult. Many brothers and sisters suffer. Some suffer because of illness. Some suffer because of persecution. Sometimes you have a disease you do not know why. But brothers and sisters, the Lord knows. When we think back on what we went through, we thank the Lord.

There is a picture. In that picture there was Satan, Joshua, and God. This is in Zechariah 3. Satan was accusing Joshua saying he looked so filthy. 'Did you say you are going to Jerusalem and rebuild? You are not qualified. It is not going to work'. Here came the Lord Jehovah. He said, 'I have chosen Jerusalem. This is the branch that is taken out of the fire'. What the Lord Jehovah was saying is this, if our heart is for Jerusalem, if our heart is for the purpose of God, if our heart is for the glory of God, even if Satan accuses, the Lord will pull us out of the fire. Then we know one thing: our life is worthwhile because our life is for the glory of God.

As the body of Christ, when we see brothers and sisters suffer, whatever way they suffer, the Lord gives us a privilege, a privilege to weep with them. Thank the Lord we have the body of Christ. May the Lord move our heart to live for His glory especially when we suffer! Thank the Lord. The Lord knows. The Lamb knows. As apostle Paul said in Romans 8, 'Is it persecution? Is it suffering? Is it affliction? In all these things, by the Lord who loves us, we more than overcome'. Thank the Lord for that.

Let us pray.

Lord we thank and praise You. You have given us the Lamb to follow. We also thank You that You have given us a heart to follow Him. Lord we just pray that in any circumstances, You strengthen us to follow Him. Lord may You give us a heart to pray for Your church, to pray for Your purpose, and to consider that as our life! Thank You Lord. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.