

Terms & Conditions of Discipleship

Matthew 8:18-22

Main Idea: The terms and conditions of discipleship are absolute surrender

Good morning Saints, please open your Bibles to Matthew 8. We are continuing our series through the Gospel of Matthew, the upside-down kingdom. We will focus our time on verses 18-22.

Have any of you downloaded a new software or a new app for your phone or iPad and were confronted with a terms and conditions agreement? There is about 3 pages of legal small print and a little check box at the bottom stating, click here if you agree to the terms. Most of us scroll to the bottom as fast as we can, click the box, and charge ahead with our trusty new app. By definition, Terms & Conditions are rules by which one must agree to abide in order to use a service. Most, if not all of us, want to give other people our terms and conditions for employment or friendship and even marriage. We say, "Hey, as long as you abide by my rules we can happily continue in this relationship." We, in our self-interest, are accustomed to giving those around us our terms, which are the rules that protect our safe, happy lives. Right after I was born again, about 19 years ago, I unknowingly continued with the Lord with my terms and conditions. You see my life was a bit of a wreck when I was saved. I was in a new city, far from family, was lonely, depressed, and physically injured.

I believed I needed a savior, deliverance from my sin, and I gave Him my life. There was a problem, I also thought God would begin to bless me with all the things I wanted. What made matters worse was a book I read that imbedded a humanistic view, a me-first mentality, that if I had faith, real "faith" I could have all the things I wanted in life. I believed I was saved from hell, I believed God loved me. I believed He wanted to use me in this life. I also believed he now owed me some level of blessings and prosperity. This was a problem. One trial after another came my way. Health issues, family problems, persecution at work, money issues....what was going on? Why had God abandoned me? I thought I was now His follower, why was life so difficult? *According to false teachers of today*, my faith was too small, or *the council of Job's friends*, I must have lost God's blessing due to sin. You see, my wrongful expectations of discipleship set me up for doubt and unbelief. According to His word He hadn't abandoned me but was actually sanctifying me, building my faith.

Look at these clear expectations in 1 Peter 1:6-7: *So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*

Jesus never promised me health, wealth, and prosperity in this life. He certainly promised those things to me when I am in heaven. He asked me to follow Him, taking up my own cross. I came to Him wanting salvation but in my ignorance, moving forward was going to be under MY terms and conditions. I should have thought hard about the cost of discipleship.

Let's read today's text and see if we can discern what terms and conditions the Lord has given us.

Read vs 18-22

Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he **gave orders** to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, "**Teacher**, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Another of the disciples said to him, "**Lord**, let me **first** go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Follow **me**, and leave the **dead** to bury their **own** dead."

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ONE. At first glance at this slightly obscure passage, there is NOT a lot of clear terms and conditions to follow Jesus. To understand this passage we will need to consider supporting Bible texts and the three characters, Jesus, a scribe, and a disciple.

What do we see Jesus doing first? He gave orders to go to the other side. “pack up and set sail” said the Master. Then three verses later He states “follow me.”

Follow me was not an invite but a command. Yes, Jesus gives orders. Remember last week’s sermon, when the Centurion stated he too was a man who told his servants to go and come and to do this. *Say the word* was the Centurion’s response. He knew Jesus was in authority and could tell anyone and anything what to do. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and calmed the storm. He was in charge of all creation.

Are we surprised that He would ask or even command something of us? We are so influenced by humanism in our culture and it has fully crept into the church. Our flesh can agree with this statement, “The end of all being is the happiness of man!” The happiness of man!! It should be the glorification of God. With or without God, we have an innate propensity to whisper or even shout, I WANT MY WAY - I WANT IT NOW - What’s in it for me?

If we examine our prayer lives, we may find them full of what we want, our wills be done. Are you curious about what He wants for your life? Are your ears wide open for an offer of blessings but you have your fingers jammed in your ears for a call to follow?

Let’s not forget an important part of the great commission in Matthew 28.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

All that I have commanded you! Jesus is very serious about Himself having the authority and the love to command you anything He wants, and He wants us to learn to obey His voice, to obey His word. We have returned to our Shepherd, will you continue to let Him shepherd you? If this idea of obedience scares you - irritates you, don’t be surprised, but you should ask yourself, why am I here? Why am I at church or why do I call myself a Christian if I don’t want to obey His voice. You need to know that this master and king loves you so much, His commands are not burdensome but are there to protect us and to build His church. His commands are built on love, because He is love.

In His love, He corrects us and informs us of what is to come.

TWO How does He love the scribe? How does He correct Him? Some are wondering what is a scribe? Scribes were experts in the Law of Moses. They interpreted and examined the more difficult questions of the law. Scribes were respected teachers. This particular scribe must have been compelled by Jesus’s teaching. He approaches Jesus with respect calling Him Teacher but perhaps not fully surrendered to Him as Lord. The scribe states, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. The response of Jesus seems a bit aloof to this zealous proclamation.

Instead of a warm show of hospitality and promise to take care of this new disciple, He states foxes and birds have better and more secure dwellings than He did. Jesus always speaks to the hearts of men. Apparently this scribe’s heart thought He was joining an amazing teacher - a fellow scribe that may be rewarded greatly with material comfort and honor from the community. He approached Jesus with His expectations, His terms, and Jesus addressed them. We know from Luke 20:46, Jesus warned us about the scribes who like their long robes, being greeted in the markets, and the best seats in the synagogues and feasts.

Did the scribe follow Jesus? We don’t know. If He did continue to follow He understood the way to be hard and uncomfortable and proceeded with clear expectations.

Children, it is time to use your imagination again. Imagine if the scribe followed Jesus expecting a cushy and prosperous path. Really good food, nice places to stay, easy travel on nice boats and soft donkeys, squishy beds,

maybe a new robe. Now imagine the scribe's face as he continued with Jesus. Well they cast off the shore in their boat only to suffer a nightmare of a storm. These seasoned fishermen thought this would be the storm that would kill them. After the storm they meet two men on shore so demon possessed that no one could control them. Men that could break chains. After Jesus delivered these men, all the people of that region kicked them out because they cared more about pigs than men. They sail back to Capernaum so Jesus could heal and forgive a paralyzed man. This act had the local scribes accuse Him of blasphemy which is punishable by death.

What would this scribe have done when the scribes and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus? Would the scribe have also agreed to be one of the seventy-two disciples that Jesus sent out in groups of two? Jesus said He was sending them out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

He said to NOT take money, sandals or bag. I have a feeling this scribe would not have enjoyed the path Jesus was on. Did he hear the authority in Jesus teaching and hastily desired to follow Him? Did he not count the cost of following the lamb that was to be slain? This is a question we all should ask ourselves. Have you counted the cost? Have you accepted His terms and conditions?

THREE Did the third character count the cost? Did this disciple surrender his life, his family, so he could follow Jesus? The gospel of Luke, ch 9 reveals that Jesus first said to this man, "Follow me". Then the man answered with his terms. He was willing to follow but only on his timetable. He said, *first*, let me bury my dad. His first priority was his earthly father, earthly family. Jesus stating the dead burying the dead reveals this man's family did not have any part in Jesus. The disciple's priorities were family first and then the Lord. Jesus does a good job resetting his priority with Jesus in first position. Follow me and let the dead bury the dead. This is the command of Jesus, love Him first. Yes He commands us to love others, but that should be a response out of our first love.

It is a good thing, even biblical to want to honor your dad and your family. It is a better thing to answer the call of God first.

If we have to choose between Christ and a parent, or child, or grandparent, it will have to be Christ. According to Colossians 1:18 our relationship with Him needs to be preeminent, first place above all others. Did you notice in any race there are not two first places? Jesus needs to be in first place for the relationship, the discipleship to be right. To accomplish this in your heart you have to start knocking things and people off of the first place block. If you don't it will greatly hinder your relationship with God. It will rob you of peace. It will rob you of the joy of the Lord. It will also lead others to keep Him out of first place, out of preeminence.

Most of us want more of God in our daily lives. More holiness, more strength, the ability to overcome sin. To be led by the Holy Spirit into the good works Jesus has prepared for us.

Today's passage confronts us with our Lord, Master, and King revealing His expectations of disciples, His terms and conditions. It also reveals a scribe with expectations of comfort and we see a disciple operating on His time frame and His priorities. Our Lord Jesus gave up His life for us and purchased us with His blood. We are His people. We are to let go of all that we hold dear and see what He wants to do with it.

What is un-surrendered in your heart? It may be keeping the Lord from using you. What are the things we hold tight?

Spouse, careers, money, boyfriend, girlfriend, children, health, education, accomplishments, ministry achievements, sports, toys? It's not always about giving a thing up but sometimes things are taken from us. What if God took all you had, like Job who lost all possessions, all children, and health.

If you lost all would you still love Him? Counting the cost acknowledges the risk of loss. Job said the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Andrew Murray explains absolute surrender with a simple ink pen. "Most items have specific use or service. This pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and the pen must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write well with it. If another hand holds it partly, I cannot write properly."

So how do we surrender daily? You may say, "I have tried to let go, I've tried give Him everything, but I keep giving Him my terms." I keep a tight grip on what I love. I resist doing the hard things, I resist the uncomfortable things of God. If this is your confession, as it is mine, there is so much hope for you. Surrender is not about the law or

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performing perfectly, but right relationship. If you leave with anything today, please know that God wants surrender, but He will also work in your heart to bring it about. It is so encouraging to know God is working in us. Look at Philippians 2:13 *For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* God resists the proud and draws near to the humble. Humbly confess to Him that you want to surrender to His terms and conditions. Confess it is hard and you want His help. Pray this in faith, Lord I believe you will help me surrender but help my unbelief. You will see the Holy Spirit work in areas that were previously so well guarded by you.

You will experience joy when you see and feel Him working in your heart, speaking to you about your life, your stuff, your family, all that you have will become His. He is worth trusting, He is a good shepherd. Give Him your whole life, absolute surrender.

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surrender

Terms and Conditions

Who is in charge?

Expectations

Priorities

Your will be done

Family Life Groups

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Use questions as is helpful for group discussion.

1) What spiritual expectations do we still have that set us up for disappointment?

2) Do prosperity doctrines ideas find their way into your heart?

3) Do we get mad at God when we don't get our way? What should we do when this happens?

4) Is Jesus really our master? What ways do we still give Him our terms and conditions? What ways are we NOT surrendered to Him?

5) Can we relate to the scribe?

6) Can we relate to the disciple?

Questions? Contact Pastor Mark at mark@ebcsalem.com