



*18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, **Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.** 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. (Matt 4:18-22)*

*10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, **Hear, and understand:** 11 **Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.** 12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, **Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.** 14 **Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.** (Matt 15:10-14)*

The motto of the US Army Infantry Branch is “Follow Me!” It is emblazoned above the entrance to Ft. Benning, Georgia – home of the US Army Infantry School. It is the guiding star of every military leader, for one can little expect to be followed into combat if the commander is reluctant to lead his brave troops there. It is not possible to “lead from behind”! In fact, that is a foolish contradiction in terms. The word LEAD means to go before – to show the way, and to bear the brunt of danger. No leader worth his salt would expect his troops to go where he will not lead. What soldier would not loathe a commander who hides behind the line while his troops move forward to carry the battle to the enemy?

Jesus was the supremely ultimate example of a leader. He never asked any to go where He had not gone, and He asked none today to go where He has not already been. He was a fearless leader who knew the way, the truth, and the life and was, in fact, the

Personification of all three of those leading factors.

During the fiercest fighting at Shiloh during the War Between the States, the Confederate line hesitated under withering fire from the Union line. As the southern troops lay low for cover, they called to the Color Bearer to fall back to their line for safety. The young Color Bearer called back, "No, men! You come up to the Colors. The Colors will not retreat for they are set fast at the leading line of battle." Humbled by the courage of a boy of tender years, the southern line rallied to the colors and carried the battle, though the Color Bearer died doing his duty in the same way that the Color Bearer for the Church died in doing His duty of Redemption.

In the Army of Christ, our Lord is Himself, not only the Color Bearer, but also the Ensign of our Cause. He has gone before and faced the enemy lines head-on. Though He gave His life in advancing the Colors, He has opened the enemy lines for us to pursue on to victory through Him – the victory that He purchased.

He has not asked us to follow Him on some impossible exploit, but to follow Him to the only possible victorious offensive. Death and sin lie victims to His courageous sacrifice. He has borne the Colors beyond the gaping lines and grasped victory from the jaws of death though He gave up His own life in the ordeal. Further sacrifice is not required for He rose again according to the Scriptures and has ascended beyond the Gates of Splendor to await our own death-defying victory under those same Colors. I wrote a poem many years ago to commemorate that once-and-for-all sacrifice and victory won at Calvary:

The Scarlet Cross Banner

*High aloft the Battle Lines
The fiery angels shrilled and Cried,
As young and gallant soldiers fell
And 'neath the Crimson Banners Died.*

*The Wars of every age and time
Are fought and waged by Youth.
The blood which flows as free as Wine
Was shed for Lie, for Gold, or Truth.*

*The ancient Cause for which men Fight
Has ever been for Honor's Name.
To bear the e'er revealing Light
The Light for which our Savior Came.*

*The only Fight that lifts men's Souls
From out the dark and dewy Cave
Is that to save the Shepherd's Fold
For whom the Master's Blood He gave.*

*We cannot know the appointed Days
Upon the Earth our lives may See,
But certain is the Starry Blaze
The end of which our Days shall be.*

*Beneath the Crimson Cross of Christ
Shall every warrior take His Stand
And hold aloft the Torch of Right
Whose beams shall brighten every Land.*

Every true Christian who reads this devotion has heard a Voice calling from the Secret Place of the Heart – “*Follow Me!*” It may have been a small, still Voice; or it may have been thundered from the storm clouds of Heaven – nevertheless, you heard that voice and, like the Apostle Peter, you followed without question. My own humble little church of St. Andrews is named after the first disciple to meet Christ – St. Andrew. He was brother to Simon Peter, and he went to fetch his bother after first meeting Jesus. (see John 1:37-42) Both men were casting nets into the sea when called by Jesus. How did they respond? “*And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.*” Every man, woman, and child who hears that beckoning Voice of Jesus will do likewise. That Voice is irresistible. It may be resisted only for a moment, but the calling and election is sure. You will be drawn, kicking and clawing if necessary, but you shall come at the call.

Simon Peter was labeled a ‘stone’ by our Lord – a chip, so to speak, from that great Rock which was Christ. Yet, Peter failed miserably that night of Jesus’ betrayal. Judas may have betrayed Christ once, but Peter betrayed three times. The great difference was the fact that Judas betrayed out of malice, but Peter out of fear for which he wept bitterly for THREE days!

But Peter would be restored to his place of eminence by the Resurrected Christ. Peter never again failed of courage following that one humiliating night when he denied Christ three times and the Lord, at the very moment of his third denial, turned and looked Peter in the eyes. Please observe the change the Resurrection had on Peter’s courage. *18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.* (John 21:18-19)

It took a two-fold command of Christ to Peter to “*Follow Me,*” but from the moment of that second command to “*Follow Me,*” Peter never failed of courage even in being told that he would die a similar death of crucifixion.

Serious question: If men follow you, will they be led to Christ as did Andrew lead Peter, or will they wind up in the same polluted ditch as their leader? No man can lead from a vain and unsure faith. He must be at the forefront of the battle for the Church Militant – ready for whatever demands are made upon his life.

Are the Colors safe in your hands - are you leading, friend?