

### **The Wednesday Word, March 2, 2022: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”**

Do you know the old hymn, ‘I have decided to follow Jesus?’ It’s a challenging little song but I know some genuine Christians who refuse to sing it.

Why?

They won’t sing it because, in their opinion, it must have been penned by an Arminian with the purpose of promoting man’s free will in salvation. God, after all, they reason, is entirely sovereign and we get saved by His free will not ours.

Great point!

But the establishing of any particular theological viewpoint was not why the song was composed. Here then is the story behind, “I have decided to follow Jesus”.

About 150 years ago, some Baptist missionaries came to Northern India, to the Garo tribe who lived in an area in the state of Assam (now called Meghalaya). There, at first, the Christian workers preached without much success but then a family, (a father, mother, and two sons), got saved. By grace, they embraced that God Himself had come to this earth in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and had lived, died and risen again. He then ascended back to heaven from where He will return to judge the living and the dead.

This family’s eyes were opened to see that Christ alone, God incarnate, was the only hope for sinners. The gospel radicalized them and all four of them did everything that they could to spread the good news.

Eventually, the village Chief heard of this activity and the disturbance it was causing so he and his entourage of archers came to speak to the family. The man, his wife and sons were hauled to the center of the village. There the Chief demanded that the family immediately stop preaching this strange message of Christ crucified and that they, in fact, renounce the ‘false guru’, Jesus Christ. The family refused.

The Chief then turned to the father of the family and demanded he should stop spreading this so-called good news of Christ and warned the father that if he didn’t promise to do so, he would suffer the loss of his two sons. The boys didn’t flinch. “Well? What’s your reply” demanded the chief. The father looked the Chief straight in the eye and said, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.”

The chief was enraged so he ordered his archers to kill the sons. They promptly

obeyed.

“Now” shouted the Chief, “will you renounce this foreign God, this Jesus? If you don’t, I will kill your wife.” His wife did not flinch. Her husband replied “Though none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back, no turning back.”

The Chief gave a nod and the archers let fly their arrows and fatally struck down the man’s wife. The Chief then bellowed “I will give you one more opportunity to deny Jesus Christ and live.” But the father replied, “I have decided to follow Jesus, the cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back, no turning back.”

At the chief’s command, the arrows were let fly and the father fell dead in the street.

However, seeds of the gospel had been sown by this family and shortly after these seemingly tragic events, a gospel awakening broke out and most of the village became followers of Christ. God in his sovereign mercy even saved the village Chief.

The words of that dear martyr were later collected and woven into a pledge of loyalty that is still sung today.

Here, once more are the words.

1. I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
No turning back, no turning back.
2. The world behind me, the cross before me;  
The world behind me, the cross before me;  
The world behind me, the cross before me;  
No turning back, no turning back.
3. Though none go with me, still I will follow;  
Though none go with me, still I will follow;  
Though none go with me, still I will follow;  
No turning back, no turning back.

That’s powerful!

And that’s the Gospel Truth!