

The Story Behind the Song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”



Sadhu Sundar Singh

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” is a Christian hymn that originated in Assam, India.

According to P. Job, the lyrics are based on the last words of Nokseng, a Garo man, a tribe from Meghalaya which then was in Assam, who converted to Christianity in the middle of the 19th century through the efforts of an American Baptist missionary. He is said to have recited verses from the twelfth chapter of the book of John as he and his family were killed. The formation of the martyr’s words into a hymn has been attributed to the Indian missionary Sadhu Sundar Singh. – Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Have_Decided_to_Follow_Jesus

In 1904 a Welshman ventured halfway across the world to India and he trekked up the mountains towards a remote village in the east.

He was told, “Go back! The tribe in that village is famously violent” but the Welshman ignored the warnings because even these savage headhunters should have the opportunity to hear about the mercy of God.

One Garo tribesman from the tribe Meghalaya named ‘Nokseng’ and his family heard the Gospel and received Jesus as their Savior. The good news was too good to keep to themselves and they shared the Gospel with others in the tribe.

The chief was very angry and he had the tribesman and his family dragged before the village.

“Stop following Jesus!” the chief demanded.

The tribesman replied "No I have decided to follow Jesus I am not turning back"

The chief was furious and killed the tribesman's children.

"Stop following Jesus!" the chief insisted.

The tribesman replied "Though none go with me I still will follow no turning back."

The chief showed no mercy and he killed the tribesman's wife.

"Now you will stop following this Jesus!" the chief said.

The tribesman looked the chief in the eyes and replied "The cross before me the world behind me no turning back."

The chief could not believe his ears and he killed the tribesman.

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Jesus said if a grain of wheat dies it bears much fruit and that day many of the villagers who witnessed the persecution of that tribesman and his family also decided to follow Jesus – even the chief himself became a follower of Jesus Christ.

The tribesman's last words became the song of the village and today it is sung all around the world.

A hundred years later, you still sing this song to church.

"I have decided to follow Jesus.

No turning back, no turning back."

Do you know that you are singing the words of a dead man who lost his children, lost his wife, and eventually lost his own life for Jesus?

How many people have you lost? Some of you might have, but the fact you are reading this means you still have your own life. Why falter in faith when you lose the little things you value on this Earth? Why do you threaten yourself to stop following Jesus when hardships come? Why do you deny Christ's Lordship over your life when your friends are around?

You can lose your job.

Lose a loved one.

Lose all your friends.

Lose an exam.

Lose a great opportunity.

Lose a romantic interest.

You can lose literally EVERYTHING here on Earth, but remember Nokseng and the words he said when he lost everything:

“The Cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back.”

Friends, whether you have decided to follow Jesus this week, last month, last year, or many years ago...

Remember,

N O T U R N I N G B A C K