

The Hallmarks of Discipleship, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 10:32–33

Code: 2283

INTRODUCTION

A. The Passage

Matthew 10:24-33 says, "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher, and the servant like his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not, therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hidden, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that proclaim upon the housetops. And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, who is in heaven."

B. The Price

In his book I Love Idi Amin, Festo Kivengere, a leading evangelical minister in Uganda, describes the history of the church in Uganda. In 1885 "three Christian boys had shed their blood for Christ in Uganda. The king had ordered the arrest of these page boys in an effort to stamp out Christianity. The eldest was fifteen and the youngest was eleven-year-old Yusufu.

"They held fast their faith and staked their lives on it, though people were weeping and their parents were pleading with them. At the place of execution they sent a message to the king:

"Tell His Majesty that he has put our bodies in the fire, but we won't be long in the fire. Soon we shall be with Jesus, which is much better. But ask him to repent and change his mind, or he will land in a place of eternal fire and desolation."

"They sang a song which is now well-loved in Uganda as the 'martyr's song.' One verse says, 'O that I had wings like the angels'. I would fly away and be with Jesus!"

"Little Yusufu said, 'please don't cut off my arms. I will not struggle in the fire that takes me to Jesus!' Forty adults came to Jesus the day the boys died. This was a new kind of life, which fire and torture could not control.

"We have a Memorial near Kampala where these youngsters are remembered as the first Christian martyrs of Uganda.

"By 1887, the end of the first decade of the church, hundreds had died. There were martyrs out of every village that had believers. They were only beginners, they knew little theology, and some could barely read, but they had fallen in love with Jesus Christ. Life had taken on a completely new meaning. The value of living and living eternally had been discovered. They were not hugging their lives, but ready to give them up for Jesus.

"During these dangerous days, there was an immediate and steady increase in the number of those embracing Christ" ([Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1977], p. 11).

The history of the church is marked by those who have been unashamed of Jesus Christ and willing to confess Him before men regardless of the cost. That is what marks a true disciple. It is not knowledge or length of time that defines what a Christian is, but a willingness to confess Christ. On

the other hand, a denial of Christ before men is the mark of a false disciple. We need to examine ourselves to see whether we are true or false disciples. Whom do we confess or deny? Review Matthew 10:24-42 is a grand summation by our Lord of the meaning of discipleship. Some of what He said in Matthew 10:5-23 is explicitly to the twelve, but verse 24 begins a series of instructions on the nature of genuine discipleship.

In verses 24-25 Christ shows that the goal of discipleship is to be like Him. A fully mature disciple is like his teacher (Luke 6:40). "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). Though in times of failure our Christlikeness may be less evident, there is a pattern of Christlikeness in the life of every true believer.

William Barclay wrote, "It is told of J.P. Mahaffy, the famous scholar and man of the world from Trinity College, Dublin, that when he was asked if he was a Christian, his answer was: 'Yes, but not offensively so.' He meant that he did not allow his Christianity to interfere with the society he kept and the pleasure he loved" (The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 1, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], p. 391). But that's not what Christianity is. Those who follow Jesus Christ become more and more like Him. If that is not true of you then you may not be a Christian.

To be a disciple of Christ means that you will be treated like Him. Matthew 10:25 shows that if Christ was called Beelzebub, His followers will be called the same. The more you become like Christ the more of a problem you become to the worldly--just as He was.

The cost of discipleship means there are few who are genuinely saved (Matt. 7:13-14). There are masses of people who identify with Christianity, but you can distinguish the truly saved among them because they confront the world like their Master and are often treated like He was.

I. A DISCIPLE DOES NOT FEAR THE WORLD (vv. 26-31)

Increasingly we see the battlelines being drawn between good and evil in our world. Western society has lost its Christian moorings--it is post-Christian. As a result we may see more and more heat applied to the church. Perhaps that will be the best thing that could happen--the heat of persecution will blow away the chaff in the church and we'll know who the real Christians are. We will also be able to distinguish the unsaved and reach out to them.

A true disciple will not fear persecution. He knows God is just, has a healthy fear of Him, and realizes he is valuable in His sight. So he is able to confront evil and confidently confess Christ in the midst of persecution.

LESSON

II. A DISCIPLE CONFESSES CHRIST BEFORE OTHERS (vv. 32-33)

A. Those Who Confess Christ (v. 32)

"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, who is in heaven."

1. The reason for their confession

Jesus used the word "therefore" in verse 32 to indicate that what He was about to say was based on what He had previously said. The promise, power, and protection of God (vv. 26-31) should make a person willing to confess Jesus Christ before men without fear. That kind of confession is a natural response to the true Christian. Correct doctrine naturally produces proper action. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Paul wasn't ashamed because he knew the promise, power, and protection of God.

2. The meaning of their confession

The Greek word translated "confess" (homologeō) means "to affirm," "acknowledge," or "agree." In verse 32 it refers to making a statement of identification, faith, confidence, trust, and belief in Jesus as Lord, and living one's life in accordance with that confession. That confession is displayed by what one says (Rom. 10:9) and does (John 14:23; 1 John 2:17).

3. The motivation for their confession

Because God is the ultimate judge of the earth, there's no excuse for shrinking from our duty to confess Christ in times of persecution as well as times of peace. All true Christians will confess Christ regardless of the consequences.

4. The audience for their confession

Confession of Christ is to take place "before men" (v. 32). That literally means "in front of men." Confession of Christ is to be public--not in some secret place. A person unwilling to publicly confess Christ is not a Christian. Romans 10:10 affirms that "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

5. The source of their confession

Confession is not a work of man but of God. Some say that requiring open confession of Christ as evidence of true salvation is works- righteousness. But since Scripture affirms that salvation is all of God (e.g., Eph. 2:8-10) and that Christians must confess Christ verbally (Rom. 10:10), confession must be the work of God.

6. The necessity of their confession

a) 1 John 4:15--"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." A person who once walked down the aisle after an evangelistic service and says he believes but doesn't confess Christ publicly is not a genuine disciple. b) Revelation 2:13--Jesus said to the church at Pergamum, "I know thy works, where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days in which Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you." True believers will confess Christ even to the point of death. c) 2 Timothy 4:10--Paul said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed." Demas is an example of what a disciple is not: when things got tough and the heat was on, he left.

We need to examine ourselves. We may find ourselves ashamed to confess Christ before our families or among friends. If that is our attitude, what will we be like during severe persecution? We need to be willing to confess Christ under all circumstances. Does Our True Confession Mean We Will Never Fail?

In the life of every Christian there will be lapses in living up to the high standard to which we are called. And the Lord has promised forgiveness to those who are genuinely His. Peter was a genuine disciple and he denied his Lord, but his heart was broken because he knew he had failed to live up to the standard set for him (Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62). Paul told Timothy, a young pastor with great talents and gifts, not to be ashamed of Christ or of Paul (2 Tim. 1:8). The key in each situation was that Peter and Timothy turned away from weakness and failure to confess Christ. True disciples may fail to confess Christ at times, but that certainly won't be the pattern of their lives.

7. The result of their confession

Jesus said, "Whoever ... shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). That means on the day of judgment Christ will acknowledge that those who had confessed Him are His. He will affirm His loyalty to us just as we had affirmed our loyalty to Him. That is the result of true discipleship. The Lord's words probably pierced deep into the heart of Judas Iscariot just as they do to many false disciples today.

8. The wonder of their confession

Imagine the thrill of someday standing before God and having Jesus say, "This one belongs to Me." It means the Lord of the universe has pledged His loyalty to us. When we are loyal to confess the Lord Jesus in the midst of any situation He has pledged to speak our name in the Father's presence. A Pagan Governor's Understanding About True Christians

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117) there was a governor in the province of Bithynia named Pliny. In a letter Pliny detailed to Trajan how he treated the Christians within his province. Anonymous informers told Pliny that certain people were Christians. Pliny gave the

accused the opportunity to invoke the gods of Rome, offer wine and incense to the image of the emperor, and curse the name of Christ, "none of which things," Pliny said, "any genuine Christian can be induced to do" (The Letters of the Younger Pliny, 10.96).

Even a pagan Roman governor understood the cost of discipleship. He understood that even in the midst of torture true Christians could not be compelled to deny Christ. We often wonder if we could meet that kind of test, and are encouraged to know that God gives grace for those kinds of times. But the cost of discipleship means that there are probably significantly fewer real Christians than it would appear.

B. Those Who Deny Christ (v. 33)

"But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, who is in heaven."

1. The open rejectors

Many openly reject, despise, and hate Christ. A while ago my son told me about a street preacher he and his friends saw. After listening for a time, he realized the man was giving a good strong presentation of the gospel. A group of people came up to the preacher, stood only inches away from him, and began to curse at him, yell obscenities about Jesus, and mock him. But he kept on preaching. Some will deny Jesus the way those people did.

2. The secret rejectors

If that street preacher had been a false disciple he would probably have clammed up and run. In fact he probably wouldn't have been there to begin with. In Matthew 10:33 Jesus was speaking of people in the sphere of Christianity--those within the aura of discipleship. They go along with the externals but when put to the test they deny the Lord.

a) How they deny Christ (1) By their silence People often deceive themselves by believing they can be Christians in secret. They don't reach out to others around them and no one even knows that they claim the name of Christ. But if others don't know a person is a Christian it is doubtful he or she is a Christian. (2) By their actions Christ can be denied in many ways short of denial before a firing squad. A worldly lifestyle denies Christ (James 4:4). b) What their punishment is Denial of Christ in time will result in denial by Christ in eternity. The "I will confess" of verse 32 and "I will deny" of verse 33 are stated in the future tense. They point to final judgment. On that day many will say to Christ, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matt. 7:22). But He will say "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (v. 23). In the heart of every godly pastor is the gnawing anxiety that someone in his flock isn't real and will find himself eternally damned. Certainly the Lord was concerned about Judas in that way. Judas is a classic example of one who pretends to belong but when the going gets tough, bails out for a price. What a fearful price he paid for his thirty pieces of silver!

CONCLUSION

Matthew 25 contains a picture of what the separation of true and false disciples will be like. At the end of the tribulation the Lord will separate the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep (those who love and know Him) on His right and the goats (those who don't know Him) on His left. Verse 34 says, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The King will confess they are His because they confessed Him. How did they do that?

Certainly they did it with their mouths (Rom. 10:9) and before men (Matt. 10:32). But beyond that the King will say, "I was hungry, and ye gave me food; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee; or thirsty, and give thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you've done it unto one of the

least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:35-40).

Those who truly confess Christ in word and deed will demonstrate His love for His own. "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" (1 John 3:17, NIV). One way of confessing Christ is responding in the way He would respond in any given situation.

Since the goal of discipleship is to be like Christ, we ought to manifest Christlikeness in our relationships. So many people who say they are Christians come to church and survive the service but have no concern for those around them or the lost people of the world. They're not like Christ and there is no progression towards Christlikeness in their lives.

We all need to inventory our lives and see whether Christ is working in us. Only those who pay the cost of open confession of Christ will be confessed by Him as genuine before the Father. Those who by life or lip deny Him will be denied by Him. We will have lapses, but when we in brokenness ask the Lord's forgiveness, He forgives us. That's the attitude and heart of a true believer.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What historically has marked a person as a true disciple of Jesus Christ?
2. What might be the benefits of persecution of the church in Western society?
3. Why doesn't a true disciple fear ?
4. _____ naturally produces proper action.
5. What is the particular meaning of the Greek word homologeō in Matthew 10:32?
6. Confession of Christ is to take place " _____ " (Matthew 10:32).
7. Why is it important to recognize that confession is not a work of man but of God?
8. Does the necessity of confessing Christ mean that if we fail one time to confess Him, we are lost forever? Why or why not?
9. What is the result of confessing Christ?
10. Christ's pledge in Matthew 10:32 means the Lord of the universe has pledged His loyalty to _____ .
11. What was it that the Roman governor Pliny said Christians couldn't be compelled to do?
12. The cost of discipleship means that there are probably _____ real Christians than it would appear.
13. In Matthew 10:33, what kind of people was Jesus referring to?
14. What are ways professing Christians can deny Christ?
15. How will those who deny Christ be punished?
16. How does Matthew 25:35-40 illustrate confession of Christ?
17. Since the goal of discipleship is to be like Christ, what should we manifest?

Pondering the Principles

1. Often when the gospel is presented the high cost of discipleship is never mentioned. But will a faith that does not cost result in true salvation? In the nineteenth century the Anglican bishop J.C. Ryle wrote, "I thoroughly approve of offering men a full, free, present, immediate salvation in Christ Jesus. I thoroughly approve of urging on man the possibility and the duty of immediate instantaneous conversion.... But I do say that these truths ought not to be set before men nakedly, singly and alone. They ought to be told honestly what it is they are taking up, if they profess a desire to come out from the world and serve Christ. They ought not to be pressed into the ranks of Christ's army without being told what the warfare entails. In a word, they should be told honestly to count the cost" (Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots [Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press, 1979 reprint], p. 73). How ought the cost of discipleship have an impact on the way you present the gospel?
2. Matthew 10:24-42 contains a number of demands. We are to proclaim the gospel from the

housetops (v. 27), confess Christ before men (v. 32), value Christ above our families (v. 37), and take up the cross and follow Him (v. 38). Does that mean we obtain salvation by our works? Certainly not! Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Although we are sure that men are not saved for the sake of their works, yet we are equally sure that no man will be saved without them" (The New Park Street Pulpit, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963 reprint], p. 245). Works are a natural by-product of saving faith. Consider what the works of your life demonstrate about what you really believe.

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