

Front Page - June 2021

Discipleship

Introduction

In the previous article we observed that as recorded in Matthew 4:18-21 the Lord called Peter, James and John.

- a) The first observation is that in both cases, and in every case I am aware of, the Lord called those who were already working in manual jobs. They were industrious individuals and in the case of James and John, they were men who knew the reality of responsibility in sustaining that which another had begun. It was their father's business.
- b) The second observation is the difference in emphasis between the two callings for when the Lord called Peter, the emphasis is on what and why the Lord called him, whereas with James and John it was that which they were to leave.

In Matthew 5:1 we are given another step in the education of discipleship. The Lord went to the top of the mountain, "His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them". The disciples had to learn to "listen," not just hear or daydream or look at the clouds, etc. while the Lord was speaking. They had to listen, to hear and think through that which was being spoken, and more than listen, the truths He spoke had to be put into daily living. It was not just a matter of listening and then going home and forgetting.

While we never read of the Lord as a disciple, yet as the Servant of the Lord He knew what it was to listen and be taught. Two passages in the Old Testament substantiate this truth (Isa. 42 and Psa. 119).

The Lord As The Listening Servant

During His teaching ministry the Lord spoke a parable of the sowing of seed and the various soils into which it was cast. There was good soil and that which was incapable of producing that which was for the blessing of man. As always, when we desire the greatest example we look to the Lord as He alone had a pure heart (Psa. 24:4) and was ever good soil. When the Lord listened He heard the words of God clearly for there was no sin nature in Him, and He did nothing to interrupt fellowship with God. Because of His spiritual ears being undefiled by sin, He had perfect clarity of hearing. He listened to hear so that he could:

- a) Fulfill the purposes of God in blessing others
- b) Know and obey the will of God in His own life

The man of Psalm 119 foreshadows our Lord and His esteem, etc., to the word of God. He:

- a) Delighted in God's word (Psa. 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 174)
- b) Rejoiced in God's word (Psa. 119:14, 111, 162)
- c) Sought God's word (Psa. 119:45, 94)
- d) Longed for it (Psa. 119:20, 40, 131)
- e) Hoped in it with prayer (Psa. 119:43, 74, 114, 147)
- f) Trusted in it (Psa. 119:42)
- g) Meditated on it (Psa. 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148)
- h) Esteemed God's word to be right in all things (Psa. 119:128a)
- i) Treasured God's word in their heart (Psa. 119:11)
- j) Remembered God's word and did not forget it (Psa. 119:49, 52, 93)
- k) Clung to God's word (Psa. 119:31)
- l) Keeps, observes, and practises God's word (Psa. 119:33, 69)

One of life's irritations is when people tell others how to do things and what to when they themselves utterly fail. The Lord was the living personification of all that He taught. Dr. Luke who, due to his profession was systematic, carefully wrote, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). It was not "began to teach and do" but "Do and teach". His activities, whither verbally or actively, never shaded or contradicted that which He said or professed.

Front Page - June 2021

Discipleship

Personal Application

God has given to the Lord the place of preeminence, making His firstborn higher than the Kings of the earth. Paul was moved along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21) to write, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18), and when on the Holy Mount, God declared, “Hear ye Him” (Matt. 17:5).

- a) It is becoming to the saint to understand that acknowledging the Lord’s preeminence is not an option, neither is it a joint decision making. If one is going to be a disciple it demands 100%.
- b) This was the problem with Peter when the Lord let down the sheet with all manner of foods on it. He gave a contradictory response saying, “Not so, Lord” (Acts 10:14; 11:8). He was calling the Lord “Lord” but saying “not so” to the truth God was seeking to teach him. It was a joint decision making, God will not have that.
- c) This is also the problem in a number of “churches”. In some, every man is doing right in His own eyes. The individual decides whether to live in the acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ in what He teaches. For instance, the Lord taught the saints to be baptized and remember Him. Yet many fail to obey for several reasons. There are those many thousands who have never understood these truths and they are not to be blamed. Rather, the question is, since these things ought to be practised, why are they not taught except in little close knit groups? Discipleship necessitates a willingness to be taught of God with a willing heart to obey.

Do The Work Committed To You

The second step in discipleship is not to determine what the individual wants to be or thinks they have the ability for. The next step is to do the work readily at ones hand and to do it with all the enthusiasm and love for the Lord they can muster. Allow a personal illustration. When I was a teenager I would go around the countryside in Ireland selling gospel booklets and New Testaments. I would walk miles to meeting, I was too young to drive, and give out countless gospel tracks. In time I had a Sunday school and became interested missionary work. After about 7 years I came to Canada to learn missionary life and at that time, a 22 year old was given an adult Bible class. It was a step by step, line upon line teaching in the practical every day world.

- a) If an individual is not willing to do the lowest activities in any sphere of life, they will never develop to all they could be. In the spiritual world the individual must learn the basics of service.
- b) One of the precious truths of scripture is that there is not a saint on the earth who is saved without a work to do. In ages past the Lord knew each individual’s characteristics and tailored a work for the individual to do. Not only that, but He determined when was the best time to put the individual in and where to place them for the greater glory of God. Had Billy Graham been preaching today, the thousands would not be coming. He was God’s man for that time and people. Spurgeon was the same, Whitfield the same, Luther the same. No one can say, “there is not a work for me to do”.

Concluding thoughts

Many years ago an elderly lady asked a man to fix her gate. Carefully he dug a hole and set a new post in concrete. After some time the gate was hinged on and the lady was called to check it. She stood there swinging the gate back and forward and with a big smile said, “No one could have fixed it just like you”. How wonderful when we each stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ the Lord looks back at our life’s work, irrespective of how long we are given, and looks at the reader and with a smile say, “No one could have done it just like you”.

... Rowan Jennings