

How to Be an Excellent Disciple, Fidelity, Part 1

Luke 6:46-49

J.C. Ryle wrote, "It has been said with much truth that no sermon should conclude without some personal application to the consciences of the listeners." That's what we've been getting from Jesus week by week. What Ryle continues by saying, he calls it a "solemn and heart-searching conclusion to a most solemn discourse." I have certainly found that in my life and I believe that all of you have as well.

We also find here some great comfort, which we're going to find today. A lot of rest for the true disciple comes from the verses in front of us at the conclusion. In Christ' soul-searching conclusion to this sermon, as he does press the implications of the Sermon on the Mount upon our consciences, we have taken some time to identify four principles of discipleship, Christian discipleship: authority, humility, fecundity or fruit-bearing, and fidelity.

We've been walking through each one of those principles week by week. Authority in verse 39 to 40. Watch who you follow. Don't follow blind leaders. Humility in verses 41 to 42. Make sure you can see clearly, so that you can see who you're following and who's following you. Fecundity in verse 43 to 45, which speaks to the necessity of fruit-bearing, the principle of life that is found in all of God's work. Whether in a teacher you're following, you ought to see fruit born, or your own life.

Finally, for today, the word fidelity. That's verses 46 to 49, the final part of the sermon. And that is what Jesus' conclusion is all about. He's taking the principles of his sermon and he's pressing them on us, demanding obedience, pressing home the implications on our consciences so that we would conform to his image, to his truth. Let's just look at the conclusion starting in verse 39 where it says, Luke says, "He also told them a parable." And then it continues. "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one

who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of the house was great.”

So those are the principles: authority, humility, fecundity, and today, fidelity. The principle of fidelity. And that’s at the heart of Jesus’ fundamental concern in the question he asks there in verse 46, Why do you, why do you profess to follow my authority but you’re not faithful to me? is really what he’s saying. His concern there is a concern about fidelity.

The word fidelity is synonymous with faithfulness. That’s what this is all about, this section here at the end. Faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Faithfulness to the very end. That is foundational in this issue of Christian discipleship. It’s absolutely critical. I looked up the word, fidelity, in my copy of *Roget’s Thesaurus*. Every pastor should have a copy of *Roget’s Thesaurus*. And as I read the entry, I found the synonyms of fidelity are really quite useful in helping us to better understand Christian discipleship.

Let me read this brief entry to you. And as I read, just think about your own relationship with the Savior. Think about your week. Think about your priorities, your interests, the way you spend your time. Think about your fidelity to him. Fidelity entry in *Roget's Thesaurus* is synonymous with faithfulness or devotion to a person, a cause, obligations, or duties. Fidelity is allegiance, constancy, faithfulness, fealty, loyalty, steadfastness. I like that. Devotion to a person.

That's the very essence of Christian discipleship, isn't it? Allegiance, constancy, fealty, steadfast loyalty to the very end. That is what we mean by fidelity. And if we can call anything chief among Jesus' concerns for his disciples it's that we live lives of faithful obedience to his Word. Not just a general obedience, a once-a-week attendance at a service. But a lifestyle of obedience, a daily walk. Something that is part of your moment-by-moment decision making. Sets priorities.

It's so important because, this issue of obedience, because Jesus loves us. He wants us to follow his teaching for the rest

of our lives. He wants no other love to be first. He wants no other use of time and priorities to come in front of him. If we examine our lives, we all have to admit that sometimes we get off track, don't we? Sometimes we find ourselves pursuing things that keep us away from obedience to him.

That ought to be an exception in our lives, not the rule. But it has become quite common in many circles in evangelical Christianity today, to avoid any demand for obedience. To really mute the biblical call to holiness. To ignore passages of Scripture that demand effort, that demand striving. This is a demonic spirit, really, of antinomianism. Anti-*nomos*, anti-law. It's a lawless attitude that calls Pharisees those who press the demand for obedience among Christians.

That spirit may be common today; that is not biblical Christianity. And it's certainly nothing Jesus taught. In fact, he taught us exactly the opposite of that. Jesus told us repeatedly that we must expect pain and suffering and self-discipline in the battle to mortify the flesh and to put on righteousness. There's a very real agony in denying self and taking up a cross and in following Jesus Christ.

I could cite many instances of Jesus' demand for our obedience, but just one example will do for now because it's so powerful. In Luke 13:24, Jesus said, "Strive to enter the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." The word, strive, it's the verb *agonizomai*. That's just to get your foot in the door. It requires agony. We're to enter by the narrow gate.

The narrow gate is the constricted way, the confined way, the way that you just barely squeeze in. And you can't squeeze in holding onto any of your sin and your self-righteousness, your loves, your pursuits, all your hobbies. You squeeze in and there's nothing else but your soul. The gate is wide, the way is easy that leads to destruction. Those who enter by it are many. And keep in mind that wide gate, it's not the worldly secularists; it's the religious people. It's the churchgoers. That's the wide gate.

Matthew 7:14, Jesus tells us, "The gate is narrow, the way is hard that leads to life, which is why those who find it are

few.” Those are not seeker friendly words coming from our Lord, are they? This is not the just-add-water-for-an-instant-megachurch approach to evangelism. He actually seems to be turning people away at the gate.

That’s interesting because he’s kind of opposite of a lot of evangelistic strategies you find today and church growth strategies you find today. Because Jesus is here, he’s not keeping anything in fine print. He’s actually taking that fine print and he’s blowing it up to 20-point font. This is full disclosure on the demands of discipleship. He’s taking the commitment to obedience in Christian discipleship and he’s plastering it up as it were on a freeway billboard. So it’s just in plain sight, plain view so that you cannot miss it.

That’s why it’s such a pity today that so many are missing the message because you know what else they miss? They miss the joy of Christian obedience. They miss out on the secret of the easy yoke. Jesus said to a weary people, people enslaved to their sins, Matthew 11:28 to 30. He says, “Come to me all of you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, learn from me,” because he says, “You can trust



me. I'm gentle and lowly in heart, promise me," he says, "you'll find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Beloved, that's what faithfulness to Christ means. That's what fidelity is all about. It's about devotion to a person, this person, who gave his life for us. Represented in the elements in the communion table before us. His body broken. His blood shed for us, for you and for me. And he described himself here. He very rarely drew attention to himself in some ways. He very rarely said this, but he drew attention to his character here and described himself as "gentle and lowly in heart."

He's a meek soul. You're going to be yoked to something in your life. Either it's the sin nature that you were born into, the enslavement of the sins that have held you captive since birth, the chain that's held by the cruel hand of the murderous devil, the evil one. Or you could be set free from him. You could be set free from your sin. And you can submit yourself to a new master. You can be yoked to the loving, kind, gentle, tender authority of the meek and lowly Savior who wants to order your life for you.

For all who profess Jesus as Savior and Lord, we want to know how to follow him faithfully. How to follow him in obedient fidelity so we can stand firm to the very end. And these verses, verses 46 to 49, Jesus is going to teach us what fidelity means so that we can walk faithfully before him in joy and in the security and the assurance we find in Christian obedience.

So first point, number one, fidelity to Christ means personal accountability. Keep in mind that our personal accountability, yours and mine, we're not accountable to just anyone here. We are personally accountable to a sovereign, to an eternal king, the king of the kingdom of God. Look at verse 46 and think about this question that Jesus asked here.

In fact, imagine, this is kind of terrible to consider, but imagine if he asked you this question. "Why do you," fill in your name. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" If I translate that in a wooden literal sense, he's asking according to the order of the grammar, but why me are you calling Lord, Lord, at the same time not practicing what I'm

saying. In other words, why the incongruity? Why the obvious contradiction? What gives here? That you would say one thing and do something completely different.

Would you consider yourselves in the crosshairs of that kind of a question? Does that make you uncomfortable? It does me. Is Jesus really talking to us when he asks this question? Is he talking to his true disciples here? Or is he aiming at false professors who hideout among sincere believers? Is Jesus confronting actual false disciples who are standing on this occasion right in front of him, hearing this sermon? Or is this more like preventative language, proleptic language where, where Jesus speaks of a future reality like tares among the wheat.

As he speaks about that future reality as if it were occurring right in the present. Is this some kind of preemptive strike that kind of smokes those people out? Just to tell you where I land, I think that Jesus is taking aim at those false professors. Tares among the wheat. Even as he knows that his words are going to provoke among the faithful, self-examination. He realizes that and that is a good thing for us, beloved, to examine ourselves.

Jesus is calling to mind in his own mind the history of redemption. He remembers how, and we should too, how the people of Israel, they told Moses, and remember when they told Moses this, what I'm about to say, they had just experienced the Exodus. The mighty power of God. God's miraculous salvation to extract a slave people from the heart of the greatest superpower that was enslaving them, on the earth. Incredible power, supernatural revelation. Supernatural salvation. Miraculous!

They had just come out of Egypt across the Red Sea, saw the dead bodies of the Egyptian army scattered all over the place. Made their way through the wilderness, came before Mount Sinai. And they had just witnessed fire falling on Mount Sinai. Ear-splitting trumpet blasts. Terrible scene. The, the mountain trembling. You ever seen a mountain tremble? Mountain trembling in the presence of the Almighty coming down, engulfed in smoke. God came down in thunder.

And the people had said to Moses, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." That is, they said, "Lord, Lord," but did

they practice obedience to the law of Moses? It was within a very short time that they were dancing around a golden calf. So certainly not. God sent prophets over and over to confront them and their outright contradiction.

Isaiah 29:13, "The Lord said: 'This people draws near with their mouth, honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me [...] their fear of me is a just commandment taught by men.'" God said, "These words that I command you today, they shall be on your heart," Deuteronomy 6:6. Though they took God's name on their lips, they didn't honor him in their hearts. Adulterous desires led them astray. Desires in the hearts that were unchecked. They didn't watch their heart with all diligence, did they?

So as Jesus speaks to the disciples on this occasion standing right in front of them, he realizes there are many on that day who are one day going to depart from him. He realizes there are many who are going to depart at his harder sayings, misunderstand him, misinterpret him, misread him. They'll walk away. You read at the end of John 6, well before his crucifixion, it tells in verse 66 that after this, "many of his

disciples,” same language here. Calling them disciples. “Many of them, though, they turned back and no longer walked with him.”

So Jesus is anticipating that here on this occasion that there are many who will say, “Lord, Lord.” The repetition, by the way, indicates this emphatic profession like you hear some people today, don’t you dare question my Christianity. I know my life is completely out of step and doesn’t match anything written in the Bible, but don’t you dare question my Christianity.

“Lord, Lord.” It’s emphatic. It’s confident. They don’t follow through with the implications of lordship. They say, but they do not do. What counts to the Lord is obedience. What counts to him is faithfulness. James, no doubt he is reflecting on this obedience emphasis in Jesus’ teaching. James wrote this, James 1:22 to 25, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. And he looks at himself, goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law,” get this, “the law of liberty,” the law of

freedom, fill in joy, peace, confident, happiness in Christ, assurance. "The one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty and perseveres in it, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts," a doer who does, "he will be blessed in his doing."

Look that's what Jesus intends for all his disciples, that they be blessed in their doing. You want to see a happy Christian, it's the one who's obedient to Jesus Christ. Obedience to the Savior is pure joy for the Christian disciple. So this question in Luke 6:46, it's first and foremost a warning to false disciples.

They're going to stand one day before Jesus, before the righteous judge, who's going to judge the entire world in righteousness. And they're going to have answer this same question, but then at that time, they're going to be looking back in time. "Why did you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and yet you did not do what I told you?" You know what? At that point, it'll be too late. No opportunity for repentance on that day.

So this warning here at the beginning of his ministry is a gracious warning. It's a tacit reminder for all of us, faithful disciples as well, that we will all stand before Christ, the only sovereign, personally accountable to him for all of our actions. We will give an account for the consistency, or the lack of consistency between our profession, between our practice.

For us who are faithful disciples, true believers, we'll stand before the *bema* seat, not the Great White Throne judgment. That's been taken away in the cross. We'll stand before the *bema* seat where it says in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he's done in the body whether good or evil."

That word evil is the word *sapros*. We talked about that with the, the rotten fruit, the rotten trees, right? That's where we're all going to stand. Our lives are going to be exposed. I asked you to imagine if Jesus asked this question of you. And perhaps by imagining that question posed to you, you feel just a bit uncomfortable, as I have repeatedly. If it



provokes you to self-examine, if it prompts in you the fear of the Lord, then take heart, beloved. That is a good thing. Because it probably means that you've got a spiritual pulse. It probably means that God is at work in you, that you're alive and not dead when you can sense the fear of the Lord when you should.

Because it's the hypocrites, it's the spiritually dead and blind, it's those who are dulled in their sensitivity to, because they're harboring secret sins and practicing them. As a matter of their character, a matter of course, they become hardened. Their consciences are no longer sensitive. And they, in imagining that scene, they either feel nothing, or their discomfort is very short-lived. It's set aside by other distractions, by self-justifying thoughts.

But true believers, they're tender souls. They truly do love Jesus Christ. And it pains them to think that anything in life would be out of step with him. When someone points out any inconsistency between their profession and their practice, it causes 'em sorrow, even tears, and mourning. It raises serious concern. And once they can see that inconsistency and identify

it biblically in the words of the Lord, it provokes thoughtful self-examination, repentance, a renewed pursuit of holiness.

And beloved, that's evidence, we're truly his. When we appreciate the loving confrontation, it promotes holiness in our lives. Those who hate that confrontation and avoid confrontation, well, this warning of Jesus' question stands. But those who love that confrontation, they come to Jesus. They look to Jesus and his cross as a reminder of their forgiveness. They listen to his words. His teaching leads them to greater faithfulness, to stronger fidelity. They strive to obey him, not because of craven fear, but because they love him. They hate to be out of step with him.