

How to Be an Excellent Disciple, Fidelity, Part 2

Luke 6:46-49

Fidelity to Christ means, it means complete loyalty. Complete loyalty, if you like, complete devotion, total devotion. And for the rest of the sermon here, Jesus wants to show us something. He wants us to see what a faithful Christian looks like. And before he shows us, he states his point just rather simply before illustrating it.

Look at verse 47. It says, "Everyone who comes to me hears, and hears my words and does them, I will show what he is like." The faithful Christian is the one who comes to Jesus, who listens to Jesus, and who obeys Jesus, that's very, very simple, isn't it? Can't mistake his point. There are some, though, who can hear the word, everyone, and they envision this, this mass of professing Christians, this mass of people who you know, vote conservative, this mass of people who are all in this big, grab box, of grab bag of Christian, self-identifying Christian.

And all of them come to Jesus, many of them listen to Jesus. Some of them maybe even obey Jesus. But they're all in the same group. That's the kind of evangel, evangelicalism that I grew up with. One that made no demands for obedience, but basically taught that someone could be a Christian by naming the name of Christ. They can pray a prayer, walk down a church aisle to go forward to get saved. In Baptist circles, to get baptized, too.

But in broader evangelical circles, even baptism was, was strongly recommended, but not even really necessary. Those people were all, if they came to Jesus, they were assumed to be Christians because they said they were Christians. And they said it very emphatically. They said it very seriously. They had prayed the sinner's prayer, deep in their heart of hearts. They invited Jesus to come into their life and they meant, at that time, they meant every word.

Their initial excitement. Their new believer zeal, running around doing things in the church while those older, wiser, Christians, I put wiser in air quotes, assured those younger zealous types, Oh that'll eventually wear off. And indeed it

did. Many who made eager sincere professions early on had their come-to-Jesus moment over the years. Their church attendance would start to wane and taper off. They soon stopped listening to the regular ministry of the word.

And any early signs of true heart change, that is studying Scripture, a hunger for understanding truth, zeal in obedience. All of that came to a sad end. Now, if those people attend church at all, it's usually a weak church with weak preaching by some unspiritual person who's more like a life coach or a motivational speaker; Patterns of disobedience set in, quiet self-will, all of that characterizes their lives.

And Jesus would have them return to verse 46 and listen to that question yet again. But some would have us believe that those people, they're just baby Christians. They're accustomed to drinking milk from a bottle, so don't press 'em. You know, just let 'em go. They'll eventually grow. Or, or worse, this unbiblical category of carnal Christian, which has created for all those people who still love their sin, but they want Jesus, too because he's their ticket to heaven. What is that? You don't find that here.

And I want to show you with just a couple points of grammar. That's an untenable position. It's not biblical. You cannot defend perpetual infancy or perpetual carnality of a true Christian from the Bible. And especially from this text here.

In verse 47 the word everyone, that's not to be seen as some amorphous nebulous group of people. This a, like a conglomeration of the all who came to make a profession of faith, along with the many who heard Jesus, at least for a little while. And then the some or the relatively few who end up obeying him. The grammar here that's used here will not let us see the text that way.

Rather, it's the, the one who comes and listens and obeys that is the true Christian. The one who evidences lifelong loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord. Again, just a couple of grammatical reasons to show why that must be so. First, what appears in verse 47 to be three separate verbs, so the verb come, the verb hear, the verb do, those are actually, verbs, ah, verbal forms, they're called participles. And

participles have both verb-like qualities. So when you think verb-like qualities, think action, action words and then also noun-like qualities. You remember noun from grade school, right? Person, place, or thing. Okay? So they have both those qualities, participles do. They're kind of like Reese's Peanut butter cups, right, oh my chocolate got in your peanut butter. Oh your peanut butter got in my chocolate. That's that kind of thing. Reese's. Participles. Great words.

You see how relatable grammar can be to your everyday life? Now when a participle, this is where it gets good. When a participle is governed by a definite article, definite article: The. Indefinite article: The word a, A, an. okay? Definite article the word, the. When a participle has a, the, in front of it, then the noun part of the participle, the person place or thing, that becomes the dominant part of the participle.

So here in verse 47, we're talking about not just a, any, anybody, we're talking about, the person. The person who comes and hears and obeys. So that's easy. But further, when a participle is governed by a definite article, the word, the, the verb part of it, becomes something that characterizes that

person. So we could translate this as, the one who is characterized by coming, the one who's characterized by hearing, the one who is characterized by obeying.

Got that? It wasn't so hard, right? But there's more. I feel like that guy in the commercial, But wait, there's more! There's a second grammatical reason that we can't see it as a grab bag. We can't see it as this all-inclusive group. If Jesus were referring to three separate people in verse 47, that is the ones characterized by coming, and the ones characterized by hearing, and the ones characterized obeying, by obeying. If that were three separate people, three separate kinds of people, each one of those participles would have its own definite article to indicate three separate persons.

So one article per person. But get this. There is only one definite article in front of all three participles. So that single article unites the three participles, brings them together and it's a construction that Greek students call the Granville Sharp Construction. And under certain circumstances, that Granville Sharp Construction is a Granville Sharp Rule.

So these three things: coming, hearing, obeying, they refer to one and the same person. So the one who comes is the one who hears and the one who comes and hears is the one who obeys. All three together. Look back at verse 18. All those people from Judea and Jerusalem, all those people from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, they came, verse 18. Look what it says there, "to hear him," right? "They came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases."

They came and they heard, right? Then in verse 27, Jesus speaks to whom? All those that came are there. So now he speaks to those who hear. So all those who came to him, Jesus draws attention to those who are able to hear him. It's like he's culling the crowd. He's weeding out those who are not listening or coming for all the wrong motives.

And here at the end of his sermon, Jesus puts the capstone of obedience to complete all that he said. The one who comes to, comes to him, hears him, and obeys him, as well. That is the holy triumvirate of Christian discipleship and what it means to

be faithful. In other words, we're talking about someone who is completely loyal. Complete loyalty to Jesus Christ. Total devotion.

Jesus is gonna say in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Same thing. That is a way of living. It's not a onetime act. Coming means hearing, and coming and hearing means obeying, that is fidelity to Christ.

Now is Jesus talking about absolute perfection here? No. No, he's not, but he is talking about your direction. He is talking about where you're heading. Greater fidelity, greater growth. These are all present tense participles, so the true disciple demonstrates lifelong faithfulness moving in the same direction. Always moving in the same direction.

What direction? Always toward Christ. "Everyone who come to me." For what purpose do they come? To hear Christ, to listen to his teaching, to learn his words. And to what end? Well, that



they might obey Christ. That they might put his words into practice.

They don't come Sunday mornings, ultimate, ultimately because of human relationships. They don't become, come just because they've got an obligation to teach, play, or serve or clean carpets or whatever it is. They don't come ultimately for any other reason except this reason: to hear Jesus Christ. Why? So they might obey him because that's the heart of discipleship.

Now, is that easy to do? No. No, not at all. It's hard to be a disciple. That's why Jesus uses the word, strive. But it is a lot easier than the way of the unbeliever. Proverbs 13:15 says, "The way of the transgressor is hard." Life becomes increasingly difficult for the one who does not repent. And it eventually leads to judgment.

But for the one who practices repentance, always coming, always learning, always receiving, always embracing Jesus' teaching so that they might obey him, that is the one who's way is made straight before him, who's word is a lamp to their feet

and a light to their path. At the end of that road is eternal life.

Well, that's what we see in the illustration Jesus uses, this illustration coming at the very end here as he contrasts building methods of two different builders. He said in verse 27, he's going to show us what's required to stay faithful. And now, he's going to show us. Okay, so third point, just like a wise builder, number three, fidelity to Christ means diligent effort. Fidelity to Christ means diligent effort.

Take a look in verse 48 there, the first part of the parable. "Everyone who comes to me hears my words, does 'em, I'll show you what he's like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation, laid the foundation on the rock." So stop there for a second. We've all watched this happen. We're watching homes going up all over the place in our area. And with every homebuilder I have observed, they begin not by going up, but by going down. Don't they? That's how builders build.

Same thing here. This man builds his home, and we see that he's chosen to build near running water, a stream, a river. And in an arid land, that is quite pleasant. It's beneficial to be next to a river. No need to dig a well, able to provide water for drinking and cooking and laundry and, and bathing, sure makes the Misses happy. So it's great idea. This is a very id, as I said, he's a very wise builder. Happy wife, happy life, right?

So great idea to build near the river, as long as you build wisely. As long as you build wisely. That's what he did. But notice it took a lot of work. The way the ESV translate this, translates this, it says the man, it says, "he dug deep." There are actually two verbs there, not just one. The man who built his house, first he had to dig and the first verb there is *skapto*, to excavate the ground.

And then he had to go deep, which is a second verb, the word *bathuno*, gets *bathos*, it's deep, deep, a hole, a pit. So he deepened, he hallowed out, he went down deep. Some people would be content to excavate, do a little digging and then lay, lay the foundation of the house within the earth. But this builder

is wise. He takes the time to dig, to dig down deep, and he does not stop digging and hallowing out until he finds the bedrock beneath, that's the word *petra*.

If you picture *petra*, if you picture this immense, sheer, towering rock cliff, like you can find in our Rocky Mountains. That's the word *petra*. But here this *petra* that we see exposed in our Rockies, imagine that submerged beneath the earth. Layers beneath layers of soil beneath hardpack on the ground. You got to dig because it's hidden from the service so you gotta dig and get down there.

And Jesus pictures the wise builder putting in the hard work. And he digs and he goes down deep until he finds that, that *petra*, that bedrock and that's where he builds his foundation. Now obviously the house that Jesus is describing in this illustration, it's a picture of the religious life. Think about your own life or other religious people. Think about Mormons. Think about Catholics. Think about other people who don't share our theology and they're very religious.

You could, what you see on the surface of their life can be friendliness, kindness, charity, generosity. You can see good stuff on the outside. But what's above the surface is the structure, the house. It's what we can all see and observe. So you see the structure, the way it's formed. You see the siding. You see the paint job and the roof.

So this is the speech, the behavior, the lifestyle. We could say in terms of verses 43 to 45, this is the fruit of the persons' life, what you say, how you act. But that edifice that you can see on the outside, no matter how it looks on the outside, if it's not built on a solid foundation, it is not structurally sound, is it?

Those who take great care to build their religious lives anchoring their souls into the solid bedrock of Christ, how do you do that? Come to Christ daily. Listen to him habitually. Obeying him always as a matter of course. Those are the wise builders. Make no mistake. This digging is hard work. Going down deep, it's, it's really hard. It's really strenuous stuff. It's not pleasant all the time.

It's not like watching TV or passive easy listening. It's active listening. It's diligent reading and study. It's setting aside some other things that you could be doing to make time, undistracted time to give yourself to him. So coming to him, listening to him, obeying him. It's constant watchfulness over your heart, over your life. It's prayerful meditation on the Word, on truth. It's looking after your life and doctrine closely.

Not only that, but fidelity to Christ and total devotion to him, it involves not just that hard work, but the hard work, the soul work of repentance, of finding our sins within us and putting them to death. It involves the thoughtful work of replacing sinful behavior with righteous behavior, which is pleasing to Christ and beneficial to other people. Fidelity to Christ is about putting off and putting on. It's hard work. But good work and satisfying work.

Listen, if we follow what Jesus teaches us here, look again at, at verse 27 and following. This is not easy stuff. Go back

to verse 27, "I say to you who hear," that's us. "Love your enemies." Well, three words and he's leveled us all. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." Are you kidding me?

And "From the one who takes away your cloak, don't withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from the one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, you do so to them." Whoa! Look, putting those words into practice in our lives, in practical ways, I guarantee you, is going to involve a lifetime of repentance.

It's going to expose your pride. It's going to expose your, your self-centeredness because frankly, you really don't want to love this way. It's not natural to you. It's not natural to any of us. This is the love that comes from God and God alone. And it confronts our self-love. It confronts our self-centeredness. Exposed in all this is our heart of anger. It reveals our true desires. It exposes and reveals our impatience, our tendency

toward retaliation, our own self-justifying thoughts, and words, and behavior.

And dredging all that stuff up, which is inside each one of us, I guarantee you, that is not fun. It's digging. But unlike the builder who just digs in regular dirt, which is good clean dirt, this is, this is nasty, filthy, sludgy dirt. Filled with nasty stuff. But when we dig that out, we cast it away. And we replace it with what God says in his Word is true righteousness. You know what? That is joy producing.

For the true believer, the pursuit of righteousness is pure joy. In fact, we can live no other way. As Peter said when all those disciples are departing from Jesus, Jesus said, "Do you want to go away, too," Peter? You guys? You wanna go away, too? "Lord, where are we gonna go? You have the words of eternal life." Can't leave. I cannot leave.

As hard as this is, as unpleasant as it can become, I can't go anywhere, can you? We'll find in this repentance spade work, the digging, the digging deep, we find the satisfaction of the



wise builder, who knows the soundness of his building. Because he himself worked hard to lay that foundation. Doesn't matter that no one can see his foundation once that building has gone up.

The builder knows. And he takes joy in the fact that there is someone who saw it, who knows. It's the building inspector. It's the one who came to check the foundation to see if it really is sound, see if it's really built according to specs, within regs. That builder knows. The inspector can see and inspect. He knows the quality of the work. That's our joy, too.

So Jesus starts this illustration. Guy builds a house, sets his foundation on bedrock because, after all, he knows he's got a flowing stream right next door to his house. Can't be too careful. With this house, though, resting on solid rock, he can be at ease against future catastrophe and that is the fourth point. Fourth point, fidelity to Christ means total security. Fidelity to Christ means total security.

So let's finish the parable here of the wise builder, verse 48. The one who keeps coming to Christ, the one keeps listening to him, the one who keeps studying his Word, keeps striving to obey, "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."

The ESV uses the word, stream, but when I think of a stream, I think of nice little babbling brook, a little trickle, you know. And I get some water out of it and say, Ooo, cool refreshing water. But in the context of a flood, that stream, whether it started out as a stream or river, it's no longer a babbling brook. Now it is a torrent.

And the picture here is of floodwaters, which come crashing, roaring down stream and they hit that house with overwhelming, unstoppable power, destructive energy, smashing, battering, hits the house suddenly, violently, but the man and his family, they're inside and they're unafraid. They're safe inside the house; calm, at ease, unconcerned.

They may stand at the window for a little while with a cup of coffee or hot cocoa. Then they return to the kitchen table, play another round of UNO because the father is a wise builder. He's worked diligently to set his house on this foundation of bedrock. Again, we understand Jesus is making a spiritual analogy. He's not talking about construction industry. He's not talking about insurance for those who build in a flood plain. This is a parable. He's making an analogy to our lives.

When the whole world is going to stand before the judgment seat and Christ is going to sit on that Great White Throne and he is going to judge and execute sentence. He's going to call the world to account. He's going to execute final divine judgment on all who have not obeyed the Gospel, all whose sins against God have not been covered in the cross and forgiven. And many of those who will be swept away in the flood of divine judgment, many of them will be religious people. Some from even, sadly, our own churches.

But you know what? The one who's built wisely, anchored into Jesus Christ, a life of coming to him, listening to him, obeying his Word, you know what? They have no fear that the tsunami of divine wrath will overwhelm them. Fidelity to Christ means total security. Because of the cross, all true disciples can confidently say in the language of Hebrews 13:6, "The Lord is my helper. I will not fear."

And so because the most ultimate threat is taken away, the writer of the Hebrews says lesser threats are, too. "What can man do to me?" And not just man, but every temporal bit of suffering besides; every trial, every pain, every sorrow, every call that, yes, it's cancer, all of it. All those lesser floods that hit our spiritual homes, they can do nothing to undo our anchor and our confidence in the bedrock of Jesus Christ.

Once the wrath of God has been poured upon Christ for all who believe, what else matters? Bring it! What could unseat our confidence, right? We're more than conquerors. "In all these things, we're more than conquerors through him who loved us," Romans 8:37 and following. "For I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to

come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”