

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES NO. 2650

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1899
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“If any man come to me,
and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,
yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”*
Luke 14:26

*“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him,
If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”*
John 8:31

“By this shall all men know that ye my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
John 13:35

“Herein is my Father is glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”
John 15:8

THIS morning, [Sermon #1669, Teaching for the Outer and Inner Circles] I preached upon one of the privileges of the disciples of Christ, “When they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” They formed the inner circle, and they had the privilege of hearing the expositions and explanations which our Lord gave only to His disciples.

As I was speaking, I think the question must have arisen in the hearts of many of my hearers, “What is a disciple of Christ?” and also the further inquiry, “Am I one of His disciples?” It is very important for us who are preachers to know what a disciple is, for we are bidden to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. What is involved in the making of a disciple? We cannot fully answer that question until we know what a disciple is.

In order to help you, dear friends, to ascertain whether you are truly disciples of Christ, I am going to call your attention to four texts in which the Lord Jesus mentions some of the things which are essential to true discipleship, and without which a man cannot be His disciple. I pray the Holy Ghost to make those who are disciples to rejoice in their discipleship and to count it the highest honor of their lives to have the Son of God for their Teacher and Leader.

And I also pray that those who fear that they are not His disciples may be brought to Him even while I am speaking. May they, by His grace, resolve that they also will be His disciples, and may the divine Spirit conduct them into the School of Christ, that they may sit at His feet and receive His Word from this time forth!

I. The first mark of discipleship to which I am going to call your attention is mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, the fourteenth chapter, and the twenty-sixth verse. “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” These words prove that the first requisite of a disciple of Christ is WHOLEHEARTEDNESS.

The meaning of this passage is that Christ's disciple must so love his Lord that, in comparison with the love he bears to Christ, all other love shall burn but dimly and be scarcely worthy of being even named. This verse has puzzled a great many people because they have supposed that Christ really wished them to hate their father, and mother, and wife, and so on. The slightest possible thought ought to have convinced them that He could never have wished them to do anything of the kind.

If ye take Christ's words, without seeking to find their meaning, you can make mischief out of them, for, sometimes, He speaks very boldly—I might almost have said, with the utmost reverence, very baldly—in order to make His point clear. He speaks in a manner which, in others, would be unguardedness. He goes beyond what He means us to understand literally, because He knows that this is the only way in which He can bring His teaching home to some minds.

There really was no reason why anybody should have made such a mistake and understood these words just as they stand in our version. It is not possible for a man to be a disciple of Christ if he hates anybody, for the religion of Christ is a religion of love, and hatred must be expelled from the bosom of those who receive it. It is utterly inconceivable that anybody who hated his father could be a disciple of Christ—that would be a violation of the first commandment with promise, which bids us honor our father and mother. Certainly Jesus never taught anything contrary to the commandments of His Father.

He who hated his own mother would be a monster and not a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus who cared for His mother amid His agony on the cross. Does not nature itself teach us that our love should certainly flow out to those who were the authors of our being, and who so kindly cared for us when we were unable to take care of ourselves? I am not afraid that any of you, dear friends, will err in that respect, and then fancy that you have the warrant of Christ for hating your father and mother.

Then, should not a man love his wife? Ay, that he should, for the apostle says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." I have heard of one who was said to love his wife too much, but I did not believe it, because the model for a husband's love is, "even as Christ also loved the church," and who could go beyond that? There may be an uxoriousness which, in some cases, may have been carried to such excess as to become folly and idolatry—from this evil I hope that we have escaped—but a man could not be a disciple of Christ if he did literally hate his wife. He would be unworthy of the society even of the moral, much more of the society of the gracious, if he so acted.

Neither can we imagine Christ bidding anybody hate his own children. Nature itself dictates that we should love them, and we do, and we cannot help it, nor do we wish to help it. We should be traitors to Christ if we tried to expel an affection which He Himself has implanted within us. No man can hate his children and yet be a Christian. It would be a clear proof that he had nothing of Christianity about him, just as the apostle says, of another matter, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

So, we are not to hate our children—nor are we to hate our brothers and sisters. It is only in a comparative sense, and not literally, that the term can possibly be used. And to make this very clear, Christ said that we are to hate our own life. The next step to that would be suicide and the Savior could never have meant any of His followers to commit that terrible sin. What He did mean was that He wants to have the first place in our hearts and all who are dear to us are to be second. Yea, and we ourselves are to be second, too, and are to be prepared to break every earthly tie rather than the tie which binds us to Christ Jesus our Lord.

The teaching of the text is that *Christ is to be loved more than all our relations*. It may be that we shall never have to endure the test of choosing between Christ and our loved ones, but some have had to do that. You have, perhaps, heard the story of the martyr who was going out to be burned for Christ. And as his enemies had failed to move him from his steadfastness, they made one more attempt to do so as the good man was on his way to the stake. They brought out his wife and his eleven children to meet him, and they were all weeping and kneeling down before him, begging him to recant. His wife pleaded, "My husband be not so willful. Do not go to the stake," and each of the children had been taught to lay hold of the father and to say to him, "Father, live for my sake," "and for mine, Father."

This was a trial which the good man had not expected and as he stood there, surrounded by his loved ones, he said, "God knows how dearly I love you all, and how gladly, for your sakes, I would do anything that I may do, with a clear conscience, to make you happy. But compared with Christ and His Gospel, which I love with all my heart and soul, I must give you all up, and treat you as if I had no love for you. I must go and yield up my body to be burned for the truth of Christ. Therefore, do not weep and break my heart." It was grandly done on his part and you can probably get a better idea of the meaning of my text from that incident than I could possibly convey to you by any words that I might use.

Well, dear friends, though your faith may never be subjected to that supreme test, a matter of life or death, yet you may have to be tested to see whether you love Christ more than you love your relations. There was a certain godly bishop, who had a brother who came and asked him to ordain him and to give him a living, for his trade did not prosper as he wished. The good bishop loved his brother and he would have done anything that was right to help him, but he said, "My dear brother, you are not called of God to undertake such work, so I cannot ordain you, or give you a living. I will gladly give you money to help you in your business, but I cannot make use of my position in the church to put you into a place for which you are not qualified. Had you been a fit and proper person for this holy service, I would have been delighted to carry out your wish. But as you are not, I cannot use my influence on your behalf in this way."

I wish that every bishop would act in the same way—they have not always done so. Yet there was the crucial point in which the good man felt that he must rather regard the welfare of the church than the benefit of his relative, and he must treat him just as though he had been a stranger. That is how we should deal with anyone who comes to us for a similar purpose—if he is a suitable person, let him be encouraged to enter upon the work for which he is qualified. But if he be not, let him go back to his forge, or to his plow, or to his awl, or to his plane, or let him engage in some business in which he will be earning a livelihood, and doing no mischief to his fellow men, as he would do if he were put to work for which he is not fitted.

Have not some of you, dear friends, met with cases in which the same difficulty has arisen? You must either do a wrong to Christ and to His people, or else you must appear to be hard and unkind towards some relative or friend. Well, you cannot be Christ's disciple if you hesitate a minute about what course you shall adopt. Brothers, sisters, wife, children, father, mother, must never be allowed for a moment to be put in comparison with Christ.

I remember one who, when quite a youth, felt that he must be baptized on profession of his faith in Christ, but those who were nearest and dearest to him did not agree with him upon that matter. He had not one relative who thought as he did concerning it. He laid his case before them, and being so young, he asked that he might have permission to carry out his conscientious convictions, but at the same time, he said, "If the permission does not come, I shall obey my Lord's command for, in this case, I own no father or mother, but simply do as my Savior bids me."

In matters of religion, Christ alone is our Leader—and our conscience can never own any supremacy but that of our Lord Jesus Christ. This decision is to be announced very gently, without any bitterness of spirit, and with much humility, and prayer for wisdom and guidance, but there must be no question about your action. You are to put your foot down, and say, "In everything which concerns Christ and my soul, I call no man 'father' upon earth, but at all costs, I must follow my Lord wherever He leads me."

I think you can now see the drift of the Savior's words. The rule for you who are His disciples must be—Christ first and everybody else as far down as you like. Everybody treated with kindness and due consideration, but nobody permitted to usurp the throne of the great King. So, in the first place, we must love Christ more than all our relations.

And next, *we must love Christ better than life*. You know that there have been many who have not loved their lives as much as they have loved their Lord, for they have freely yielded them up for the sake of Him who laid down His life for them. Christians, in past ages, have known what was involved in being faithful to Christ. You may have read that letter which Pliny wrote, concerning the early

Christians, in which he said that he knew not what to do with them, for they were men of good character, but they had this one peculiarity that they must in everything follow Christ.

They actually came with calm confidence, even to the Roman judgment seat, well knowing that if they were convicted of being Christians, they would be put to death—and they seemed as if they were eager to die—so anxious were they to put their love to Christ before any thought of freedom from pain or escape from death.

What the torments were, to which they were put, under their many persecutors, I scarcely dare to tell you. Think of one of them forced to sit in a red-hot iron chair, and of others dragged at the heels of wild horses, or tossed to and fro by bulls, or torn in pieces by savage beasts. Everything that could add ignominy and pain to death was invented in those times—but did the martyrs flinch or turn back? No. They stood fast for Christ's sake and threw their lives away, as if they were worth nothing at all, rather than be found traitors to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior.

We are to be prepared to do the same as they did, if necessary. Only, in our case, probably it will never come to that point in this country where, thank God, we have so much civil and religious liberty. Yet, often, a similar test may be applied to us in a modified way. There may be, for instance, some loss of business through doing what we know to be right. There are some persons who have been in the habit of carrying on their trade on the Sabbath—but when they have become Christ's disciples, they have shut up their shop on that day, and people have said to them, "You will be ruined, you will never earn a living. You know, we must live."

I have often heard that last little sentence, but I do not believe it. I do not see any necessity for us to live. There is a necessity for us to be true to Christ, but not for us to continue to live. It is a great deal better that we should die than that we should do a wrong thing. And we should be prepared at any time to say, "If need be, we will let our trade go and we will be poor, but we will keep a clear conscience." And he who has that little bird in his bosom will never lack for music, and though he has scarcely a penny in his purse, yet if he wears the flower called heartsease in his buttonhole, he need never envy the richest man in the world.

It may happen to you, in your business, that there will be an opportunity of getting money by being thieves in a respectable kind of way—there are plenty of such thieves about. But if you are a Christian, you will say, "No, money gained by dishonesty will carry a curse with it. I cannot touch it any more than I would handle blood-money. If it comes by any wrong method, I must leave it alone, for pelf and wealth shall not come to me if they cannot come honestly. I must and will serve the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost."

Sometimes, you know that for Christ's sake, our brethren and sisters go as missionaries to India or China, and some go to the Congo or to other stations in Africa where it is almost certain that, in a short time, they will be cut down by the fever. But how brave it is on their part! How truly a disciple of Christ is such a man or such a woman, who, knowing all that may be expected, nevertheless says, "My Lord calls me to serve Him in Africa, and if He sends me to a mangrove swamp and to a fever, I will as readily go for Him there as if He summoned me to sit upon a throne."

To sum up the teaching of this first text, it means that *Christ is to be loved better than everything*. If this were the choice set before us—the whole world, or Christ—thank God there are many of us who would not wait a minute for the decision. And if this were the choice—shame in the eyes of men, or else the far greater shame of deserting the Savior, oh, I hope we should not hesitate even for an instant. "No," says the Christian, "Christ is my All-in-All. If I have all things, I will try to find Him in them and if I have nothing, I will find all things in Him."

So the meaning of this text is that Christ must have wholehearted servants and if you come to Him to be His disciples, you must bring your whole being with you. Christ will never be King over a divided manhood. There was a time when this island was a heptarchy, and seven little kings ruled over it. But now we have but one sovereign, and in this united realm we never shall have but one supreme ruler.

So should it be in man's heart. The devil is quite willing to share the kingdom with Christ. "Oh!" says he, "let Christ reign and let me reign, too. We shall make an excellent pair to rule over men." But Christ will not have it so. If we are to be His subjects, He will rule over us from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot, and He will not permit Satan to have a single stronghold within us that he can call his own.

Out you must go, you vile usurper, for He has come who is King of kings and Lord of lords! The crown sits upon His brow, nor will He brook a rival even for an hour. Come, then, beloved, what say you? Are you wholehearted for Christ? If not, you are not His disciples. Listen while I read our first text again, and as I do so, do you read into it the true and full meaning of the words and feel their force, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

II. The second requisite for being a disciple of Christ is found in the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to John, at the thirty-first verse, "Then Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." So CONTINUANCE is the next trait in the character of a true disciple of Christ.

There are a great many persons who, like those Jews, profess to believe in Jesus Christ for a time. When opposition and persecution came, they deserted Him and so proved that they were not really His disciples. I do not know much about the merits of the question, which is often discussed in the papers, with regard to enlistment for a short or a long term of service in the Queen's army, but I know that my Lord and Master will not accept any of you except you enter His army for life—nay, more, for all eternity.

In Christ's true church there is no profession of faith merely for a time. Once you have made it, you have made it forever. The very way of confessing Christ, which is by baptism, signifies this, for the man who is rightly immersed into the name of the Sacred Trinity is first buried and then he rises again—and that burial, having once taken place, can never be cancelled—whatever happens, that is a fact accomplished.

Then, again, the act of immersion can never cease to be a fact. Marks made in the flesh may be removed, but when the watermark has been put upon the whole body, it can never be removed. He who has been buried with Christ may have been a hypocrite and a deceiver, but notwithstanding his hypocrisy and deception, he has passed through the outward form of the ordinance and he can never clear himself from the responsibility of it. It will be to his everlasting disgrace if he is a baptized reprobate. At the day of judgment it shall be conclusive evidence of his guilt that he either tried to deceive himself, or deceived God's people and made a mockery of the ordinances of Christ. But in the case of a true believer in Christ, continuance in the right road proves him to be a Christian.

First, we are to *continue believing Christ's words*. Whatever new doctrinal errors may spring up, we are to take no notice of them, but just continue in the faith of Christ. Then shall we be His disciples indeed. In these evil days, some new heresy appears nearly every week. There are some people who seem to spend all their time in inventing falsehoods and these, joined to the old errors that are continually being vamped up, puzzle those who are not well established in the faith, so that they scarcely know what is orthodox doctrine and what is heterodox.

But he who keeps close to his Master, sits at His feet and learns of Him—when he is taught of the Spirit, holds fast what he has received. Mr. Whitefield used to say that in his day there were some persons for whom it was impossible to make a creed. He said, "You might as well try to make a suit of clothes for the moon, for they change as frequently as she does."

And we have many people of the same sort in our day. They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." But that is not a characteristic of Christian discipleship. A man is not Christ's disciple if he is "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," allowing anybody to put an oar into his boat, and turn and twist him wherever the intruder pleases. No, the Master's message to His followers is, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

But we must *also continue in obedience*. It is the part of a true disciple of Christ to do his Lord's will in the teeth of every temptation that may assail him. You will not be obedient to Him very long without being pulled by the coat, first this way and then that. But the true disciple of Christ says, "If all the kingdoms of this world were to be given me on condition that I would fall down and worship the god of this world, I would not for an instant think of doing so, for I am enlisted in the army of the cross. I serve the Lord Christ and Him alone."

And we are also to continue in Christ's word *when we are in affliction*. There are, alas! some who, if God seems to treat them roughly, grow mightily offended with Him. A dear child is taken away from their family circle and they say that they will never forgive God. They have trouble upon trouble, and straightway they complain that God behaves ill to them—and they are ready to turn back at the first crossroad that they come to in their pilgrimage.

But this will not do for those who would be "disciples indeed." We must hold on, come fair or come foul, and this must be our motto—one that I have often quoted to you and one that I love to think of myself—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We have committed ourselves to Him as unto a faithful Creator. We have lifted our hand in token of our allegiance to Him, and we cannot go back.

Dear friends who have just lately been converted to Christ, let me exhort you to be steadfast and immovable. You cannot be Christ's disciples unless you are firm and decided. A Christian soldier who had to sleep in a tent with some ungodly comrades, at night knelt down to pray, and every time he did so, he was assailed by all sorts of missiles.

He consulted the chaplain as to what he had better do and that time-serving individual said he thought, perhaps, it was not necessary for the soldier to kneel down publicly before he retired to rest. The soldier tried the cowardly plan for one night, but he was very unhappy and his conscience was troubled about it. He had failed to bear testimony for Christ, so, the next night, he knelt down as he had done aforetime and it pleased God that, by degrees, the opposition ceased and more than that, the influence of his brave example and the words he spoke at different times, brought all the other men in the tent to kneel down, too, before they went to rest.

Whether they were all converted or not, I cannot tell, but at any rate, there was at least the form of prayer in that way. When the soldier saw the chaplain again, and told him what had happened, the chaplain commended him, and then the soldier asked him, "Don't you think it is better for us always to keep our colors flying?"

That is a good watchword for you, beloved—Always keep your colors flying. There are some professors who say, "We can carry our flag wrapped up in a waterproof case and when there is a favorable opportunity, we can let it fly in the breeze." No, no. It is best to keep your colors always flying. There may be danger and difficulty through flying the flag, but a hundred times worse danger comes from rolling it up and putting it away out of sight. Never be ashamed of what there is no reason to be ashamed of. If any man is ashamed of being a Christian, surely Christ has cause to be ashamed of him. Let it not be so with you, dear friend, but rather let each one say,

***“Ashamed of Jesus! That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No. When I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.”***

"But as to blushing when I own that I am His servant, never may such a crimson token of shame come onto my cheek!" So stand fast in the faith, beloved, for thus shall you prove that you are indeed Christ's disciples.

III. I must now pass on to a third mark of a genuine disciple of Christ, that is, BROTHERLY LOVE.

Kindly look at the thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel, and the thirty-fifth verse, "By this shall all men know that ye my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

This is to be a mark of discipleship which all men can see. Whenever there is genuine love among Christian people, everybody knows at once that they are Christ's disciples. Good men and bad men, the most ignorant and the most foolish men, cannot help seeing that love is, as it were, a sign hung out as a mark of the business done within. That disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Now, brothers and Sisters, how are we to love our brethren so as to let all men know that we are Christ's disciples? One ready way is *by considering their needs and doing the best that we can to help them out of their difficulties*. If we say to the cold and the hungry, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled," and yet do nothing practically to help them, how dwells the love of God in us? What kind of Christianity is that which is liberal only in words?

Dear friends, there are many poor people among us who are struggling to get a livelihood and alas! there are many others who cannot find any employment at all. And it is incumbent upon any who are being prospered by God to help their poor brothers as far as they can. Very often a man can truly help his fellow, even though he has no money to spare.

I read a pretty story of a Cornish miner, who was getting rather old, and the captain of the mine said, "John, I think that I can put you into an easier berth than the one you now hold. You will get more money and you will have to be an overseer of others rather than to do much yourself. I know that I can confide in you, so I will put you into that place next month." The miner said, in reply, "Captain, do you know our brother Tregony?" "Yes," answered the captain. "You know that he is older than I am," said the miner. "He cannot do a day's work now, and I am afraid that he will have to give up altogether. I wish you would let him have that berth, because though I am getting old, I think that I can keep on for another year or two. So let old Tregony have the overseer's position."

The captain did so and that is true Christian love when a man is willing to make a sacrifice because he feels that he is not quite as much in need as another. I recollect saying to a poor widow who came one morning to the Orphanage with her child, "There is another woman outside. You have been talking to her, have you not, while you were waiting to come in?" "Yes, sir," she answered. I said, "She has nine children and we can only take one. How many have you?" "Three," replied the woman. "Well, now," I asked, "which of those three shall we take?" "Oh, sir!" she said, "there is not a minute needed to deliberate about it. You take one of that other poor woman's children. I will try to do the best I can, though it is a hard pinch for me, but that woman has a heavier burden to carry than I have, poor thing."

I was pleased to see such a spirit of self-sacrifice and I am always glad when Christian people feel that kind of sympathy and love for one another. How often might rough roads be made more smooth if all acted like that! This is just what we must be constantly doing, for we cannot be Christ's disciples unless we have love one to another.

Beside that, we can show our love to our brethren *by bearing their faults*. It is a grand thing to be able to put up with a good deal. There are some people who seem to think that they have come into the world that other people may put up with them—and they certainly do play their part, for they give other people plenty to put up with. And if anybody should in the least resent it, they say, "So-and-so is out of temper with me." I was going to say that an angel might be out of temper with some people, but I do not suppose that he would. Still, I wish that these people would recollect the provocations they often give as well as the sharp retorts they sometimes get.

"Oh!" says one, "I do not believe that there is any love among Christians." Brother, you are measuring our corn with your bushel. You see that you have not any love in your heart, for if you had, there would be some love in your eye, and you would perceive some also in others. But when it is clean gone out of your own soul, you suppose it must also have departed from others.

Of course, you do not admit that it has gone out of you and you imagine that you see outside of you what is really inside, so, when you say that there is no love anywhere, it is because you are looking at yourself in the glass, that is all. But we who love the Lord can, I trust, bear with one another. I

sometimes try to think which is the greater wonder—that you, dear friends, have put up with me so long, or that I put up with you. There are some of you who are the best people in the whole world and there are others of you who are not the best, but rather the reverse, and some of you do cause us trouble sometimes.

Well, may God give all of us great patience and may we believe in one another! That is half the battle in all the difficulties that arise among Christians, that we should not impute wrong motives to our fellows, and not be ready to bring accusations against one another—but just believe that each of our fellow members is a child of God and if there is something which he has done and which looks wrong, say, “It must have been misrepresented or misreported, I am sure it must—he cannot have done such a thing. I will stand up for him. He is my brother, so I will defend him.”

There is one other point in which some of you may exercise love for one another and that is, *in rejoicing in each other's happiness*. This is a point which is far too often forgotten. You know the tendency among men—here is a man who is rising in the world, so there are many who say, “Ah, humph!” They do not say anything more, but they shrug their shoulders and they look full of unutterable things.

Or there is a brother who has done well in the church and he is referred to in terms of approbation. Then at once somebody begins to try to pull him down and says, “Ah, yes! I could have done what he has done.” Then why did you not do it? “Oh, but he had such great advantages!” Yes, perhaps he had, and you also have had opportunities of doing something or other, but you have not made the best use of them.

Now, instead of being jealous of our brother's success, ought we not rather to be rejoicing in one another? If a man is poor, let him rejoice that everybody is not as poor as he is. If he is troubled about his worldly circumstances and he meets with a brother who has no cause for such sorrow, let him say, “I am glad he is better off than I am. I do not want him to have anything to worry him as my troubles perplex me. I praise God for his prosperity, I bless the Lord for his happiness.” Then when we see an especially gracious and gifted man coming into the church and serving God, let us welcome him heartily and say to one another, “Here is a true comrade for us and we are glad that God has sent us such a man to help us in His work.”

I wish that we were all of the mind of that noble Spartan who wished to be a magistrate, but another man opposed him and received twice as many votes as he did. What did the Spartan say? “I am grateful that the country has better men than myself and I am glad to see that it knows where to find them when it wants them.”

So, dear friends, be glad when God provides better men than you are to do His work. Let the preacher rejoice when another preacher excels him. That is the point to which we must all bring ourselves. Let the Sunday school teacher praise the Lord when she finds another teacher who altogether eclipses her. What a blessed thing it is for the Bible-class teacher who has a large company around him, to find another brother raised up who gets a better class than his has ever been! Bless God when it is so, dear friends. This is one of those points that is often hard, but it ought to be easy—and it would be easy if we had love for one another. And if we have not such love, we cannot be Christ's disciples.

IV. I must close now with just a few remarks about the last characteristic of a disciple of Christ. It is mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel, at the eighth verse, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” So the last mark of a disciple is that of FRUIT-BEARING.

What is bearing fruit in this sense? Well, first, it is *doing service for Christ*. He said to His disciples, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing,” plainly implying that the fruit which is to come from abiding in Him will be seen by our doing something for Him.

Christian men and women, the Lord Jesus Christ does not want to have any followers who never toil or fight for Him. He does not wish to have with Him shepherds who never feed His flock—merely

nominal Christians who never do anything for Him. Does this touch any of you? Some of you come in here, Sabbath after Sabbath, and you sit and enjoy my ministry, but you do not help in the Sunday school, you do not distribute tracts, you do not preach, you do not do anything. How can you be Christ's disciples?

I suppose you are like some officers of whom I have read, who draw large salaries because they are such distinguished ornaments to the service. It is a great honor to have these people in the army, though they never saw a sword drawn except on review days. So, no doubt, it is a very fine thing to have a number of church members who are simply ornamental persons—they swell our numbers when they are counted with us and people say, “They are so very respectable that they help to make us all respectable.”

Well, now, to tell you the truth, we do not care an atom about your respectability. We think that the most respectable person in the world—that is, the person who most deserves to be respected—is the one who is doing something. He who does nothing deserves to be starved, even as the apostle Paul said, “This we commanded you, that if any will not work, neither shall he eat,” which is much the same thing as letting him be starved. Let us try to be fruit-bearing disciples by doing all that we can for Christ, because if we do not bear fruit, we cannot be His disciples.

Next, *fruit-bearing will be proved by our prayers*. Notice the words of our Lord—“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” Prayer, then, is a blessed fruit of grace—prayer for others, prayer for Christ's church, the prayer that brings down unnumbered blessings from above. Many a sick, bed-ridden saint, who cannot speak and who can scarcely lift her hands, can lie there and do great things in prayer. Joan of Arc was not half so mighty as that poor invalid. She is the King's true warrior. While she lies there apparently helpless, she is commanding the legions of heaven by her invincible petitions. See, then, dear friends, that ye bear much fruit in earnest, prevailing prayer.

Another method of fruit-bearing is *by a holy character*. O beloved, I implore you to be holy men and women! Seek after close conformity to the likeness of Christ. Nothing does more good for a church than for its members to live the Gospel in all their concerns at home and abroad.

But I think that we shall not bear fruit as we should unless we *endeavor to bring converts to Jesus*. Dear mistress, seek to win the soul of your little maid. Good master, employing so many hands, get them together sometimes, and talk to them about your Savior and pray that He may be their Savior, too. Can you do it? There ought not to be one barren member of this church. Everyone ought to be able to feel that when he comes before God at the last, he shall be able to say, “Here am I and the children thou hast given me.” For this let us live. For this let us labor. If we do not, we cannot be Christ's disciples.

I remember one who never did anything for Christ, and when somebody spoke to him about his lack of fruit-bearing, he said that he bore inside fruit. I never heard that idea before, so I turned it over in my mind and the next time I met him, I said to him, “Are you still bearing inside fruit?” He answered, “Yes.” “Well,” I said, “we shall never get at it till you are cut down.” Fruit is evidently intended to be an outside thing that is borne for the benefit of others. So, in this respect, brethren and sisters, see that you are fruitful by rendering all possible service to our Lord and Master.

The real application of my four texts is this—Are you, dear friends, Christ's disciples? Let that question be passed around and let these four marks help us to judge ourselves—are we distinguished from those who are not Christ's disciples by our wholeheartedness, continuance, brotherly love, and fruit-bearing? May all these things be in us and abound. And if we have none of them, may we apply to Christ for them! Lie at His feet and confess your sin, and then look up, believe in Him, and live forevermore. The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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