

CLARITY MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

CLARITY TRUMPET

"It's Time for CLARITY!"

For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

-First Corinthians 14:8, 9-

Total Discipleship

By definition to be a disciple is to be a *learner*. There have been disciples of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Karl Marx, the Buddha, and so forth. For instance, before his conversion the apostle Paul was a disciple of one Jewish teacher known as Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). As a teacher myself, I know there are learners and then there are *learners* – those who latch onto every word and really absorb what is being taught. So it is with disciples of Christ.

Broadly Speaking

There were multitudes of disciples of Jesus. They were willing to be taught by Him and to even embrace at least *some* of what He taught, but they were not necessarily totally committed to what He said or to what He demanded. Some, in fact, were not even saved; that is, they did not really believe in Him as their promised Messiah.

Even the twelve early followers were disciples in this broad sense of learning from Jesus, but they were not saved until they had been following Him for awhile. We have the account of when they placed their faith in Christ for salvation recorded in John, chapter two. In this chapter we have the testimony of Jesus performing His first public miracle – the turning of water into wine. In verse two we are told that *"both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding."* The miracle obviously persuaded these disciples, except for Judas, that this Man they were following was far more than a mere human, and verse eleven records their response to His miracle: *This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.* "Believing in Him" is the condition throughout the New Testament, and especially in John's Gospel, for receiving eternal life. Note 3:15, 16, 36; 6:47; 7:37-39; and the key verse of John – 20:31. So this was the point in their lives when they came to salvation. Other disciples, however, did not believe in Him.

The record of this phenomenon is in John

6:60-71. In verse 60 it says, *Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"* Verse 61 records that those same disciples *"murmured about this"* – eating His flesh and drinking His blood. So Christ clarified that He was not speaking in a physical sense but spiritually (v. 63). He then clearly said, *"But there are some of you [disciples] who do not believe."* *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him* (v. 64).

The reaction of these disciples was stunning. *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more* (v. 66). Were those who turned back disciples? It says they were, doesn't it? Did they "believe in" Him; trust in Him? It says they did *not* believe in Him, doesn't it?

Christ asked the disciples who did not walk away if they, too, wanted to "go away" (v. 67). Boldly Peter said, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (vs. 68, 69). The apostle Peter knew there is a distinct difference between being a disciple and being a believer to eternal life.

Note further the concluding comment by Jesus in this chapter. *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you twelve and one of you is a devil [demon]?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve* (vs. 70, 71). He chose one of the twelve *what?* One of the twelve *disciples*, even an *apostle*; and he was not ever saved!

Narrowly Speaking

There were believers in Christ back then who were totally committed to Him and would follow Him wherever and however He would lead them, even to death if need be. In fact, history records that of the twelve apostles (Paul included) all died as martyrs except for John who died in exile. Even among true believers, however, it seems that only a few followed Jesus fully – without any reservations.

Today we think if we walk someone through

a little paperback “discipleship manual” that he has been disciplined and we have fulfilled that part of the Great Commission in making him a disciple. While not being opposed to using printed materials to lead another believer into a deeper walk with the Lord, I must protest if in doing so we believe a person who has completed the printed assignments is now a disciple – in the narrow Biblical sense.

Biblical discipleship is *radical*. It is not synonymous with making a decision to “serve the Lord,” though such a decision may well be the beginning. Nor is it the same as “being in fulltime Christian service,” though you might think anyone who is devoting his or her life to Christian service would be a Biblical disciple. Sadly, there are a great number of people in one form of Christian ministry or another who are lazy, proud, self-serving, and unwilling to truly sacrifice for the sake of the Lord and the Gospel. One of the most obvious evidences of this is the fact that one of the first things many ministerial candidates want to know from a prospective church is the pay package and the added benefits, whereas the overriding concern ought to be what does *God* want of *me* rather than what do *I* want from *them*!

Contrasts Between Salvation and Discipleship.

Having stated that true Biblical discipleship is radical, let’s see just how radical it is portrayed in Scripture. *In contrast* to discipleship, our salvation was costly to God (John 3:16; Romans 8:32), but a free gift to the believing sinner (John 4:10, 14; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9); and that salvation depends solely on God’s ability to keep us (Jude 24) and cannot be lost (John 5:24; 6:37-40).

Biblical discipleship, on the other hand, is costly to the believer (Luke 14:28-33), involves work performed (I Corinthians 3:11-15), depends upon the believer’s submissive obedience (Romans 6:16; 8:5; 12:1,2), and can be lost or forsaken (John 6:59-71). While salvation involves *sonship* (Galatians 3:26), discipleship involves *service* (I Corinthians 4:1, 2).

The Biblical Description of True Christ-Honoring Discipleship

Let the *radical* demands of *Biblical* discipleship sink in as you consider these passages dealing

with it.

Luke 14:26-33 (summarized):

- As a believer you *cannot* be Christ’s disciple unless your love for Him is so supreme that what you feel for others, especially those you love, is as hatred in comparison. *He must come before those whom you love the most* (v. 26).

- You *cannot* be His disciple unless *He comes before your own personal comfort* (v. 27).

- You *cannot* be Christ’s disciple without forsaking all that you have. The total ownership of all you possess must be turned over to Him without reservations. *He must come before that which you cherish the most* (vs. 28-33).

Luke 9:23, 24:

- You must “deny yourself daily” and follow Him (v. 23).

- You must actually *DO* this, not just hide behind a pious sounding, “I’m *willing* to deny myself and follow Him” (v. 24).

A Biblical disciple –

- “Abides in” God’s Word, meaning to habitually remain under its authority (John 8:30, 31).

- “Bears much fruit.” Just bearing fruit or bearing *more* fruit is not the trait; it is bearing *much* fruit by abiding in Christ (John 15:6, 8, 16).

- Lives under the Lordship of Christ over His total life, the evidence of which is wholehearted obedience. Jesus said, “*Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things I say?*” (Luke 6:46).

A Heartfelt Prayer

Every time I think about, write about, or speak on this subject, I am cut to the heart. *My* discipleship compared to what God has revealed, and contrasted to what Paul lived, always seems to come so far short of the Biblical norm.

The world is waiting to see the real item. Instead, it steers clear of anything “Christian” because of all of the hypocrites, the pretenders, the play actors, the charlatans in Christian circles.

*God help me. God help all of us who know Christ to be the **Biblical** kind of **radical follower** of the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything less is unworthy of the Name we bear.*

Richard A. Seymour

Clarity Trumpet #37

Post Office Box 10 • LaGrange, WY 82221

Email: Dick@ClarityMinistries.org

Website: <http://ClarityMinistries.org>