

# CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP:

His Privileges and Responsibilities.

A. C. P. C.



LONDON: J. E. HAWKINS,  
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A PAPER READ AT THE

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BY

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## CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP.

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**I**T may be well at the outset of this paper carefully to consider what is the subject with which we have to deal.

There are three special aspects of the Christian life brought before us in the New Testament; namely, those of the soldier, of the servant, of the disciple. The soldier has to fight, the servant to minister, the disciple to learn. It is the last of these three that we have to consider to-day.

A disciple is, or should be, *a learner*. The word disciple is derived from the Latin verb *discere*, to learn.

The life of the disciple may not appear so attractive as that of the soldier, nor so useful as that of the servant, but—is it not equally important, equally blessed?

Are *all* Christians disciples? We read, that in the days of the early Church “the disciples

were called Christians." Now, might it not often be asked, "Are the Christians disciples?"

It is not always either pleasant or easy to be a learner—a pupil.

When a young man goes to the University he becomes at once *in statu pupillari*; but his three years' course is before him ere he can take his degree. He chooses the subject in which he seeks to graduate, and sets to work diligently to study. The professor's lectures in the special subject he has selected must be attended, and unless he attends a fixed number of these he cannot qualify for his degree.

Would you and I graduate in the school of Christ? Then we must attend the lectures—truly become the pupils of our great Teacher.

This subject seems a most appropriate one for a young men's conference; yet it is well to remind ourselves that *none will ever be too old to be a learner*.

### Christian Discipleship: Its Privileges.

What are they? We shall only have time to consider a few of them in this paper.

First, surely, it is one of the chief privileges

of the disciple to be *frequently with the Teacher*. As in the earthly school, so in the heavenly. "Learn of ME," says Christ. What a blessed privilege! Let us prize it, and be much in the company of "the Master."

At the University you are obliged to attend a certain fixed number of "the professor's" lectures. You *may* attend them all. Which man knows most of the mind of the teacher—he who just "keeps his lectures," as it is called, or the man who never misses one?

Oh for more of "the mind of Christ"! Would we have this? Then let us value and use the privilege of sitting at His feet, to learn whatever lessons He may have to teach; for "who teacheth like Him?"

Another privilege of the disciple is to enjoy *the society of his fellow-disciples*. Do you seek to be a Christian disciple? "Love the brethren," and "as iron sharpeneth iron, so shall the countenance of the man his friend."

At the University those, who choose the same subject in which to graduate, attend the same lectures, read the same books, and are thus constantly thrown together. Presumably their

tastes are similar. You do not expect to find the classical man giving much of his time to mathematics, nor *vice versa*.

"A man," we are told, "is known by his friends," and, if "he has friends, should show himself friendly." "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

What a privilege to be gathered, as we are here to-day, a company of fellow-disciples, to hold sweet converse together, "Jesus Himself being in the midst"! May such blessed intercourse draw us each one nearer to Him; for the nearer the spokes of the wheel come to the centre, the nearer are they to one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

A third privilege of the disciple—though one perhaps by many hardly regarded in that light—is *discipline, or learning fully*. The word is derived from the same root as the word disciple. Discipline is to be taught in a way we might not always choose for ourselves. Yet what would a school be, or what indeed a university, without discipline? If

Christ Himself "learned obedience" (marvellous words!) "by the things which He suffered," so also must the disciple; for "the disciple is not above his Master."

How thankful we may be that we are disciplined, not left to our own way, to follow our own devices. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"; "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting." The *valley* is fruitful, not the mountain-peak. We need the shadow sometimes as well as the sunshine. The chastened Christian is usually the one who has had the deepest experiences, and who knows the most of his Lord.

Christian disciple, do not shrink from the privilege of discipline. If the Lord sees well to lay His hand upon us, He Himself cannot be very far off; and the closer we draw to the one who holds the rod, the less do we feel its stroke.

Sometimes discipline takes the form of *persecution for Christ's sake*. If so, this too is a privilege. They persecuted Him, they will also persecute us; and the "partaker of the sufferings" shall also be "partaker of the glory."

Another privilege of the disciple is to become in time *himself a teacher*. Surely this is one of the chief ends of learning: a responsibility doubtless, but even more a privilege. To teach others, so to learn, that we may be able to impart the knowledge we have received. Let him "that teacheth wait upon teaching." The Lord commanded His disciples, after they had gone through their three years' course of training with Him, and as He departed from them, "Go . . . . *disciple* all nations"; while the apostle Paul speaks of "faithful men, who are able to teach others."

As members of the Young Men's Christian Association—many of us in important positions in connection with the work—is it not one of our greatest privileges to instruct others in the things of God? Let us learn well, in order that we may impart well. We want men "rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith as they have been taught"—men "mighty in the Scriptures," who, when the younger disciple comes to them for help and teaching, shall be fitted and able to introduce him to their own great Teacher, so to teach him, even

as they themselves have "learned Christ . . . and been taught by Him."

This thought seems almost naturally to lead us on to the second part of our subject; and having thus considered a few—only a few—of the privileges, shall we now look at some of

### The Responsibilities of "Christian Discipleship."

If the chief privilege of the Christian disciple is to be *with* Christ, *the chief responsibility is to be like* Christ. "Followers [imitators] of God." To represent, not *mis*-represent Him.

As "the only Bible most men read is the life of the Christian," it is well to remember that we are left in the world to be "*even as*" He was in the world. Do those about us see the Master in the disciple? Is the teaching, the character, of the Lord Jesus manifested in our daily life and conversation? "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart," said Christ. Are *we* "meek and lowly"? Do we seek—is it our aim to be so? "The meek will He teach His way." What a responsibility to be *His representatives*! Not sometimes, but at all times; so to "let our light shine before

men that they, seeing our good works, may glorify"—not us, but Him.

We often hear the question asked about one and another, who have distinguished themselves in the schools of science or of arts, "Whose pupil was So-and-so? How well he recommends the one who taught him!" Is it thus with the Christian disciple? If not, why not? We are commanded "so to walk *even as He walked.*"

Now, what is to be the chief object of our representing Christ? Surely that we may *win others also to become His disciples.* "He that winneth souls is wise." Are we seeking to win others to Him? "My teacher *knows* a lot," a Sunday-school scholar was overheard remarking to one in another class. "My teacher *loves* a lot," was the reply. Which of these two teachers would be the more likely to win the pupils?

"God is love." Christ is the manifestation of the love of God. Let us love men and women to Him, by daily, hourly reflecting His love in our lives. It is said that those who are much in each other's company become like one another. Our responsibility is to "grow in

grace, and in the knowledge and love of our Lord and Saviour"; so to "abide in Him" that we may be increasingly "conformed to His image," and ever manifest Him in all His attractiveness. May we be satisfied as His disciples with nothing short of this.

Another responsibility of "Christian discipleship" is to *forsake all for Him*. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be My disciple." Possibly some may be inclined to regard this rather as a condition of discipleship. Doubtless it is so, and it would indeed be well if all who seek to become Christ's disciples would "count the cost" beforehand. Were this the case we should find far fewer "backsliders." Levi, we are told, "left all," and afterwards rose up to follow Christ. The leaving all was previous to the outward manifestation of discipleship. At the same time, we find coupled with the forsaking all the *daily* cross-bearing. We are not called upon to make crosses for ourselves; it is the *Lord's* cross we have to bear, and to bear it "for His sake." How do we bear the unkind word spoken against the disciple for the Master's sake? The *being*

*ignored*, treated coldly on His account? Do we resent this, or accept it—yea, even “glory in” it—for Him? Oftentimes such treatment is far harder to bear than open persecution.

Then what about the daily denying ourselves, not in things which are absolutely wrong—we have, of course, no right to have anything to do with these—but in matters that may be “lawful, but not expedient”? How far below this standard most of us come! “Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord.”

“Forsaketh not *all* that he hath.” What does this mean? Most of us probably have not many “worldly goods” to forsake. Do not these words imply *definite* “*separation unto God*”? yielding up “all” to Him? He will not keep it, but will give it back, bearing His stamp upon it, “to be used in joyful service for my King.” What have we, what have I, that I may thus yield to Him? “ALL!” Lord, show me what this means. Where shall I begin? My will? my reputation? HE “made Himself of no reputation.” Shall the disciple do less? Oh, may He search us and try us, and show each one what to him is meant by

*"all that he hath!"* It is comparatively easy to sing, "Here, Lord, I give myself away," but a very different thing to do it.

Another responsibility of the Christian disciple is to *"bear much fruit."* "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples." This thought seems closely allied with the preceding one—"forsaking all" that we have. What is the fruit we are to bear? "Fruit unto holiness"—the manifold "fruit of the Spirit" of God. But how may it be *"much fruit"*? It is that which is to "approve" the discipleship. "If it *die*," are the Lord's words, "it bringeth forth much fruit." What do these words signify? Self-crucifixion. "Not I, but Christ." "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth *fruit unto himself*." Our vineyard is to be kept *for the Lord*, and He will come "seeking fruit." Will He find fruit unto ourselves, or fruit unto God?

How is it with our Young Men's Christian Association work? Is the prospectus drawn up *for Him*? Are all the arrangements made—the meetings carried on—the speakers selected for His glory? All done, not only to attract

young men, but *to attract them to Christ*. God grant there may indeed be "much fruit" this coming autumn and winter—"some thirty, some sixty, some even an hundredfold." Then shall we "come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with" us, that we may lay them gladly, willingly at the Master's feet. Let us "bring all the tithes" into His storehouse, and wait on Him individually, unitedly, until He pour us out "such a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it"; for has He not said, "From *Me* is thy fruit found"?

Once again, the great Teacher says, "If ye *continue* [abide] *in My word*, then are ye My disciples indeed." Truly, this is not the least important responsibility of Christian discipleship. "*Hold fast!*" is the command thrice repeated in the closing book of the Bible. Yet men are letting go on every side, instead of holding fast. We live in an age when it is *fashionable to "let go."* May we see to it that we "**HOLD FAST.**" *Continue in His word*, keep more and more closely in all to the "What saith the Scripture?" upon any matter that may come under discussion.

We are called *to submit*, not to discuss. Christ must be *absolute* Monarch, nothing less. The words of the wisest, greatest theologians of to-day are not to be placed in the same scale with the Word of God. Strange, is it not? that the first question of which we have any record, "*Yea, hath God said?*" is the question of the nineteenth century. The devil has not changed. If only he can persuade men and women to doubt the word of God, to question the *ipse dixit* of the Almighty, he has half won the battle. Let us continue—abide in "the old Truths," and what we cannot now understand be content to leave; for "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain."

Said a little boy to his older brother, as the two watched the sunset together, "I am *sure* the sun moves. Look! I can see it going down behind the hill." "Father says it is the *earth* that moves, and not the sun," was the older boy's reply; "and *what father says is true.*" Thus may it ever be with the Christian disciple—"What my Father says is true." "*It is written*" is enough for me, for was it not enough for my Master?

Practically too, let us "continue in His word" by obeying His commandments. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "The disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them."

In conclusion, we read more than once, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the disciples were "*filled with the Holy Ghost*"; and again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we are definitely told to "be filled with the Spirit." This, then, is both a privilege and a responsibility of the child of God. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Would we enjoy the privileges, would we fulfil the responsibilities of "discipleship?" Then let us seek from the Lord the enduement, the filling of the Holy Ghost, so that we may, from the very commencement of this our Conference, and throughout the rest of our lives, be, not in name only, but in reality, "Christian disciples."