

This Fellow's Disciple

John 9:13-34

Comedian, actor, producer and co-founder of United Artists, Charlie Chaplin was popular the world over in the very early days of film-making. Charlie Chaplin look-alike contests were held across the nation. One day Chaplin entered one of these contests on a lark. He came in third.

If a Christ-like contest were held, how would you place? Would other people look at your life and know that you belong to Him? Many who claim to know Christ might be shocked to learn that they would come in last place in appearing, acting, and living like Christ. Just by watching you and the way you live, and by listening to the things you say, can other people know that you are a disciple of Christ?

What is a “disciple”? We tried to answer that question last week, by pointing to Scriptures which reveal that being a disciple of Jesus requires much, much more than the average Christian understands. The word “disciple” means “learner,” but being a disciple of Jesus means a whole lot more than just learning what He taught. At a deeper level, a disciple is one who adheres to what he has learned. He follows it. He lives by it.

The Bible makes it clear that being a disciple of Jesus means that we put Jesus first, ahead of everything else. Jesus Himself said, *“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:33). He said the same thing in a different way in Matthew 16:24, *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

As we pointed out last week, salvation costs us nothing, because Jesus paid the price for our sin. But discipleship will cost us everything. Alan Redpath was a pastor of the great Moody Church in Chicago. He once said, “Before we can pray, ‘Lord, Thy Kingdom come,’ we must be willing to pray, ‘My Kingdom go.’”

Here in John 9, we have the story of a man who had been born blind, but who was healed by Jesus. The story ends with the man worshipping Christ. And when we read this story carefully, we are able to uncover several characteristics of a true disciple of Christ. The Pharisees thought they were insulting the man when they said “You are this fellow’s disciple!” So let me ask you today: “Do you want to be This Fellow’s Disciple?” Then pay attention:

1 This Fellow's Disciple has had a personal experience with Jesus Christ, vv. 1-7

This is where discipleship starts. What happened to this man was deeply personal. From the instant he was born, he had never been able to see. We don't know how old he was when Jesus saw him that day, but he was old enough to answer for himself when his parents were asked about him. So he was mature. And all that time he had never seen a single thing—not the first sunrise, a smile on a baby's face, or even his own hands.

Now through a personal experience with Jesus, he has received his sight! Just imagine what those first few seconds of vision must have been like for him! And what happened to this man was so important, so huge, that it caused everyone who knew him to start talking! They wondered if this was even the same person they had known before. Some thought that this couldn't possibly be the same man—after all, who has ever received sight after having been born blind? No, they said, he only looks like the same guy.

Having a personal experience with Jesus Christ must come first. It should go without saying, but let's don't assume anything here! There must have been a time in your life when you confessed your sins and surrendered your life to Him. There must have been a time when you made a conscious decision to follow Him as Lord.

Listen to this! The change that Jesus brings into your life may be very, very subtle, but it will be there. In this man's case, it was a lot more obvious—he was blind, now he could see. But get this—this is so important! Becoming a Christian means that there is some fundamental change in your heart, your life, your mind. If Jesus has not made a difference in your life, then it's past time to ask whether or not you're even a believer.

You've got to know Jesus if you're going to be a disciple of His. If you have not had a deeply personal experience with Jesus Christ, then it's time to ask yourself the very difficult question of whether or not you even know Him. This is not to put you down—it's to make absolutely sure that you are certain of your salvation and your relationship with Him. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is personal—it's not something someone else can do for you, and it's not something you inherit. You don't accidentally fall into it. It requires a decision, a commitment and a surrender—and those are three things you must do every day.

So the first thing that characterizes This Fellow's Disciple—*and this must be first*—is that he or she has had a personal experience with Jesus.

2 This Fellow's Disciple obeys Christ without hesitation, vv. 6-11

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus spit on the ground, made mud with His saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. There are a lot of educated guesses as to why Jesus made mud with His saliva, but let's don't get sidetracked. What's important for us today is what He told the blind man to do next: *"Go wash in the Pool of Siloam."* And that is exactly what the man did. The end of verse seven reads, *"So the man went and washed, and came home seeing."*

One thing stands out immediately: Jesus told the man to go and do a specific thing, and that specific thing is exactly what he did. Jesus did this frequently in the Gospels. Once He told a man with a withered hand to stretch out his hand. He told a paralyzed man to take up his bed and walk. To a man with leprosy, His instructions were to go and show himself to the rabbi for validation that he had in fact been healed. To the man born blind, He told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam.

To us, He also gives a specific set of instructions. We're not talking about a set of rules and regulations, an extensive listing of all the things you've got to do and follow before you can become a Christian. This is the most basic element of trusting Christ and coming to know Him as Lord and Savior. This is what He says to us:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
(Matthew 11:28-30)

Author and Bible teacher Kay Arthur has written, "If you do not plan to live the Christian life totally committed to knowing your God and to walking in obedience to Him, then don't begin, for this is what Christianity is all about. It is a change of citizenship, a change of governments, a change of allegiance. If you have no intention of letting Christ rule your life, then forget Christianity; it is not for you."

Pastor Adrian Rogers said once that there are two words which will change our lives: "Yes, Lord!"

You might not be blind this morning. This message is not about that. The message is about how eager we are to obey Jesus without hesitation in whatever He says to do. If you're holding anything back then the bottom line is that you're not following Him. So here's the second characteristic of being This Fellow's Disciple: A disciple obeys Christ.

3 This Fellow's Disciple gives a consistent witness, vv. 11, 25
The curious neighbors had never seen anything like this! When he insisted that he was the same man who had been born blind and used to beg, they wanted to know more: "*How then were your eyes opened?*" they asked him in verse 10. Verse eleven gives us his answer: "*The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.*" Notice that this was a simple telling of the facts; there was no drama; he didn't make a performance out of it; he didn't exaggerate or embellish.

And his testimony didn't change, even when he was confronted by the antagonistic Pharisees. The Pharisees couldn't understand what had happened to this man. This was not within their boundaries of how things were supposed to happen. They were convinced that Jesus was a sinner because He had healed the man on a Sabbath, but that didn't make any sense to the man who was formerly blind. So look at the consistency of his testimony in verse 25: "*Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*"

Pay attention to those words "*I don't know.*" There are a lot of things about living for Christ we may not know. There is much we have yet to learn. And it's okay to say "I don't know" when you don't know. But notice that even though he didn't completely understand what had happened to him, he continued to give the same story every time he was asked. You and I may not have all the answers, but if we've had a genuine experience with Jesus, and we are following Him with all our hearts, then we should be able to give a consistent testimony every time.

So the third characteristic of being This Fellow's Disciple is that our witness of what Jesus has done for us is consistent. It is consistent not only in the things we say but also in the ways that we live. Our testimonies about what Christ has done to change our lives should match what we do with our lives.

4 **This Fellow's Disciple stands with Christ, even if alone, vv. 18-23**

Others won't always believe us when we say that Christ has done something marvelous in our lives. Verse 18 tells us that the Pharisees didn't believe that this man had actually been born blind. So they sent for the man's parents and asked them, "Is this your son, and if he's your son, tell us how it is that he now can see?"

The parents were afraid. The Pharisees had already made it known that anyone who said that Jesus was the Messiah would be thrown out of the synagogue, so they were hesitant to say too much. Here is what they did say: "He is our son. He was born blind. But how it is that he can now see, or even who did this to him, we don't know."

Their next words meant that their son was going to be standing all by himself. "He is old enough. Ask him; he can speak for himself."

If you are a consistent disciple for Jesus, you will find times when your beliefs and convictions will mean that you are standing alone. Others may turn away, make fun of you, call you names, even mock you—but because you follow Christ as a disciple, you are willing to stand alone if necessary in order to demonstrate your love and devotion to Jesus.

At the end of verse 34, we read that "*they threw him out.*" That means more than they just threw him out of the room. What probably happened was that he was thrown out of the synagogue, excommunicated, the very thing his own parents had been afraid of. A pastor friend of mine took a stand on a certain issue, and others called him all kinds of names. My favorite, and one I had never heard before, was "Biblethumptard." Of course, they meant it as an insult, just as the Pharisees did when they called the formerly blind man "This fellow's disciple." But for a true disciple, names like that are badges of honor, that we should be considered worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ.

So the fourth characteristic of being This Fellow's Disciple: even if everyone else turns away, even if no one else understands or agrees, you stand with Christ and will follow Him, regardless of what it costs you and the names they may call you.

The History Channel this past week showed a miniseries which proved to be quite popular entitled "Hatfields & McCoys." Between 1865 and 1890, the feud claimed

more than a dozen members of the two families, becoming headline news around the country, and eventually finding its way into American folklore. At one point the governors of both Kentucky and West Virginia even called up their state militias to restore order.

Today the feud has been resolved and members of the two families have intermarried, are good friends, and even attend the same church. All are agreed that the feud began over an argument involving a pig, but there are differing opinions as to what caused the feud to end. There is one ending of the story which is not often told.

Devil Anse Hatfield, the leader of the Hatfield clan, had himself participated in much of the shooting and killing. When he was 72 years old, Devil Anse Hatfield walked down the aisle of a revival meeting and received Christ as his Savior. Afterward, he was baptized in the cold waters of Island Creek near his home. A song was written about that baptism:

Island Creek was cold when Devil Anse went under, but when that bearded man came to the top, he was shouting and a singing, the rifle fire stopped ringing and the water in Island Creek turned boiling hot.

Friends and neighbors say that Devil Anse Hatfield spent the last years of his life in peace, knowing that he was forgiven, his sins washed away in the cool mountain stream. And there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the old Hatfield warrior had become a disciple of Christ.

Do you want to become This Fellow's Disciple? Here are the characteristics:

You've had a personal experience with Jesus
You obey Christ without hesitation
You give a consistent witness
You stand with Christ, even if alone

A small boy and his ten-year-old sister were sitting next to each other in church. As the sermon ended, he asked his sister, "Now is it all done?" "No," she whispered back, "it's all just said, and we must go and do it."

So it's time to "go and do it." Will you commit yourself to being This Fellow's Disciple?"