

False Discipleship

In the New Testament salvation and discipleship are two sides of the same coin, or like Siamese twins that are joined by a tie which can be severed only at the price of death.

It is not uncommon to hear Christian workers urging seekers of Christian faith to “*accept Christ*” now and leave moral and social questions to be decided later.

Salvation is held to be immediate and automatic, while discipleship is thought to be something optional which the Christian may delay indefinitely or never accept at all.

The false notion is that obedience and discipleship are unrelated to salvation.

We are saved by believing a historical fact about Jesus Christ, that He died for our sins and rose again, and applying this to our personal situation.

The whole Biblical concept of Lordship and obedience to Jesus Christ is completely absent from the mind of such a seeker.

The absence of this concept of discipleship from present-day Christianity leaves a vacuum which we instinctively try to fill with one or another substitute.

Pietism – that is an enjoyable feeling of affection for the person of Jesus Christ which is valued for itself and is wholly unrelated to cross-bearing or the keeping of the commandments of Jesus Christ.

It is entirely possible to feel for Jesus Christ an ardent love which is **not** of the Holy Spirit.

The love which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit is a sacrificial love, as with the love spoken by the apostle John.

The Greek word used is “*agapé*” a love that is irrespective of the response or rights of the person who is the object of that love, a sacrificial love when the personal desires of the person giving that love are set aside to express the love.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] “*If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*”

The type of love that Jesus Christ taught was to be a commandment keeping love.

The “love” witness that certain devout people have for the Virgin Mary is a love that is purely subjective.

The human mind is adept at emotional tricks and is entirely capable of falling in love with imaginary objects or romantic religious ideas.

The confusion arises from the erroneous notion that love is an enjoyable inward passion, without intellectual or sacrificial qualities and carrying with it no moral obligations.

Proof of love for Jesus Christ is simply removed altogether from the realm of the feelings and placed in the realm of practical obedience through discipline or discipleship.

Literalism – manifests itself among us in many ways, but it can always be identified in that it lives by the letter of the command alone while ignoring the spirit that it points to.

Matthew 23:23-24 [NIV] *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices, mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”*

Jesus Christ referred to this misguided habit of the scribes and the Pharisees, calling them “*blind guides.*”

Christ commands baptism, literalism finds fulfilment in the act of water baptism, and that **not** always by total immersion.

The radical meaning of this act as explained in Romans 6 is completely overlooked.

Romans 6:3-4, 6, 13 [NIV] *“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” ... “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin,” ... “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts”*

A complete change in every aspect of our lives, now dedicated to Jesus Christ as our Master as well as our Saviour.

The person substituting literalism for discipleship may read the scriptures regularly, contributes consistently to religious work, attends church every Sunday and otherwise carries on the common duties of a Christian, and for this it is to be commended.

Its tragic breakdown of literalism is its failure to comprehend the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the believer’s life of discipleship, separation from the world and the crucifixion of all natural desires and passions.

Literalism attempts to build a holy temple [**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**] forgetting that last part of this scripture that we belong to Jesus Christ, **not** ourselves.

Ignoring this last part causes us to build our “*temple*” on sand, our religious self, **not** Jesus Christ the rock. [**1 Corinthians 3:11**]

Such an attitude of mind, limited to literalism and pietism, has never denied self to take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ as a disciple.

Luke 14:25-27 [NIV] *“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’”*

Jesus Christ demands to be first in our lives at all times and in every way.

Zealous religious activity –

This is another substitute for discipleship.

Working for Jesus Christ has today been accepted as the ultimate test of godliness among most Christian groups.

Jesus Christ has become a project to be promoted or a cause to be served instead of a Lord to be obeyed.

Many people seek to serve Jesus Christ by **whatever** their fancy suggests should be done and **however** they think best.

But the “*what*” and “*how*” of Christian service can **only** originate within the sovereign will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The result is many people who run without being sent and speak without being commanded.

Psalms 19:13-14 [King James] *“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”*

Such an attitude before our Lord Jesus Christ will help us avoid a substituted discipleship, this **only** comes through a meditative study of the words of Jesus Christ.