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'Making Disciples'

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"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:19:20).

It is both interesting and profitable to study the various names by which the saved are called in the New Testament. In the Four Gospels and Acts, the word "disciple" is the prevailing word to designate the saved. The word occurs hundreds of times in the Gospels and Acts, and then is dropped and you find it no more in the New Testament. In the Church Epistles, the word "saint" is most commonly used. Nearly all of the Church Epistles are addressed to the saints. The word "saint" occurs only one time in the Gospels—Matthew 27:52—and only four times in the Acts, but it occurs 58 times in the rest of the New Testament. Here is a rather strange thing: we have popularized a word to designate saved people that occurs only three times in the Bible—the word "Christian." "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). "Yet if any man

suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Peter 4:16).

This message has to do with the word "disciple." What is a disciple? What does the word "disciple" mean? The word means a pupil or learner. A disciple is a student of Christ. A saved person is viewed as a student of the word of Christ. The word "disciple" means that the follower and believer of Christ is interested in His word. A real disciple has entered the school of Christ—for life. Here is a school from which there is no graduation. "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). It might take some of the spiritual starch out of us if we would examine ourselves as disciples—students—learners.

THE COMMAND TO MAKE DISCIPLES

We have here in our text a command to make disciples. This command is based upon the fact of authority. It is a command, not mere advice; it is a command, not mere exhortation. It was given to the apostles directly, but not to them as mere individuals, but as representatives of believers of all centuries. This command is to be obeyed until Christ returns.

It was not given to the ministry, but to the Church. Every believer is commanded to make

other believers; every disciple is commanded to make other disciples. The Great Commission means that the whole Church is to work in the whole world during the whole age. The idea has gotten around that the pastor is the professional soul-winner, and that others are to support him. Some even think the pastor is to do all the praying. They say, "Pray yourself, That's what we hired you for." But the pastor's official duty is not soul-winning. As a member of the body he must win souls—he must make disciples along with other members, but his official duties are to shepherd or care for the flock and be their overseer in their work of making disciples. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:11-16).

Now the word "bishop" means overseer or superintendent. The pastor is the overseer or superintendent of the Church. The service of the saints is for the building up of the body of Christ. What is the distinct and primary work of a believer? It is to make other believers.

There are two kinds of witnessing: public and private; two kinds of evangelism: mass and personal. The pastor does the public witnessing in his official capacity; the members are to do private witnessing as they go into their personal world. This was the order on the day of Pentecost. The 120 gave their private testimony and Peter stood up with the eleven to do the public preaching. This was the order after persecution scattered the members. They went everywhere preaching the word—not from public pulpits, but by private testimony. The apostles looked after the public ministry in Jerusalem. "The pastorate is not a religious lecture-ship; it is a spiritual leader-ship."

HOW TO MAKE DISCIPLES

1. There must be some going. As every disciple goes into his own personal world, he

is to make disciples. This is not a command to certain or a few individuals to go as missionaries; it is a command to every believer to go out into his own world—small as it may be—and make disciples. We can no more limit making disciples to missionaries than to pastors.

Some seem to want to make the Great Commission read: "Come ye out of all the community into our church and hear the gospel." But it does not say "Come," to the lost; it says "Go" to the saved. There is no command in all the Bible for a lost man to come to Church and get the gospel. The Church is commanded to take the gospel to the lost. The field will never come to us for the seed; the seed must be taken out into the field and the field is in the world. Of course, it is gratifying when the lost do come to Church and they should be invited and urged to come, but disciples are to be made by taking the gospel to them out there in the world. Nobody can hire somebody else to do his soul-winning.

2. Now when the contact is made, how are disciples to be made?

- (1) Not by getting them to join the church.
- (2) Not by getting sinners to come forward at church and give their hand to the preacher.
- (3) Not by having them sign a card.
- (4) Not by making them think that a certain seat in the church is the place to sit to be saved.
- (5) Disciples are to be saved by preaching the gospel to them.

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." On our part, we make disciples by taking the gospel to the lost. We make a disciple when we get the lost person to take the place of a sinner and trust Jesus Christ as Saviour. We make a disciple when we have convinced a lost man that he is hopelessly and helplessly lost, and that Christ is the one and only hope. In Bible terms this is called repentance and faith—repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. We get the sinner to repent by showing him that he has broken God's law and has been cursed by it, and we get him to believe by showing him that Christ has satisfied divine justice that cries for his punishment. Repentance is the sinner taking the place of a sinner, and faith is that sinner trusting Christ for salvation. The two go together—they are inseparable graces. Nobody but a conscious sinner will trust Christ. Nobody will trust Christ until he distrusts himself. Nobody will have hope in Christ until he loses all confidence in himself. Nobody will see Christ as Saviour until he sees himself as a sinner. The man who thinks he is good enough to be saved or has done enough to be saved is not saved and will never be saved until he changes

his mind on that question. The only qualification for salvation is badness and the bad man is not saved by doing: he is saved by trusting—trusting what the Saviour did on the cross.

Now there is a Divine agent in making disciples. And His work is indispensable to success. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase. We may take the Saviour to the sinner, but the Holy Spirit must bring the sinner to Christ. We command the sinner to repent, but God gives the repentance. Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25. We tell the sinner whom to believe, but God gives the faith. I Cor. 3:5. We instruct the sinner outwardly, but God teaches him inwardly. John 6:45; II Cor. 4:7.

The only drop of merit in salvation is in Christ. His blood cleanses from all sin. He paid the sin-debt in its entirety—He paid it all. Nothing can be done by any sinner to contribute to his salvation. But somebody may, in all sincerity, ask: Doesn't mourning contribute to salvation? My dogmatic reply is, "No!" "Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no respite know; all for sin could not atone; thou must save and thou alone."

Let me illustrate: A man thinks he is well; he has no idea of any organic physical trouble. By a sort of coincidence he learns that he has cancer—the fast working kind. Naturally, he is thrown into great grief and mourning over his condition. But will his mourning contribute anything to his healing? No. Now suppose the news comes to him of a certain physician who has a remedy—a certain cure—a specific for cancer. And suppose this doctor has credentials showing he has never lost a case. Now if he has faith in this doctor, he will put himself into his hands in faith that he will cure him. If he were to keep on mourning it would prove he did not have faith in the doctor. The good news, when believed, will stop his mourning.

Now the careless sinner discovers through the law of God that he is ruined and undone—lost and in danger of hell—in the toils of a law he cannot escape or beat. This causes grief, but mourning will not contribute a thing to his salvation. When the gospel that Christ died for sinners comes to him, and he believes it, his mourning stops and there is peace and joy in believing. From the side of human responsibility, there is no reason for five minutes' mourning, after we have heard the gospel. The sinner ought to trust Christ at once, and all his mourning is in the sin of unbelief. From the divine side—the side of sovereignty—conviction may precede faith by many years. It did in my case.

PLACE OF PRAYER IN MAKING DISCIPLES

You ask me if I believe in praying for sinners?

I most certainly do. But let us look into this question. When we pray for a sinner, what do we ask God to do? Do we ask Him to send His Son back to this world and die again? Do we beg God to be willing to receive a penitent sinner? No, for we know He is willing to receive any sinner.

My prayer for sinners depends upon who the sinner is. If he is a careless, indifferent sinner, I ask God to convict him of his lost condition. Until he takes to heart the fact that he is a lost sinner, giving him the gospel will be like casting pearls before swine.

If the sinner is concerned, distressed and uneasy about his lost estate, I ask God to reveal to him that Christ is the Saviour—that what Christ did is all that had to be done to make any sinner right with God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).



LEAVE IT TO *Christ*

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"
Psalm 46:1

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST
ATTEND CHURCH SUNDAY