

## **“True Discipleship”**

### **John 8: 31 – 32**

These words of the Lord Jesus are serious indeed, for they make it plain that one may openly profess to be a disciple of Christ, even though their faith turns out to be only superficial and temporary. Some of the same Jews, “who believed on him”, later “picked up stones to stone him”, (John 8: 59). We understand from this how important it is that we continue beyond our initial belief in Jesus to move on in our growth, faith and study of God’s word, ever reaching on toward maturity in our Christian experience.

A person may come to a mental acceptance of certain facts about Jesus and deceive themselves into thinking they believe in Jesus, but the genuineness of that faith needs to be tested before it can be judged as real. Notice what James says in (James 2:19-20), “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without works is useless”? Works, of course, do not save one’s soul, but the faith that does save is a faith that produces good works.

We learn in (John 2: 23-24) that an earlier group of people who had followed Jesus had also “saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, (literally, did not believe in them) for he knew all people”. It is essential that we believe in him, but even more essential that he believe in us for he knows our inmost thoughts.

The test is simple. If we hold to his teaching as we find it in the scriptures, then we are real disciples. Our dedication to Jesus Christ is measured by our obedience to his word. If we question his word or resent his word or try to avoid obeying his word by interpreting some preferred meaning of our own into his word, then we need urgently to examine the genuineness of our belief in Jesus.

If we are his disciples and do hold to his teachings, then he makes us a wonderful promise; “Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”. Literally, this means “come to know the truth”. As true disciples, (learners), we have his assurance that our continuing to study his word will yield an ever-increasing comprehension of God’s revealed truth with an ever-growing freedom to understand and obey the perfect will of God.

Many years ago one of the bishops of the United Brethren Church was approached by a young man who said he believed God was calling him to prepare for ministry. He asked the Bishop if he had any guidance he could give. This was the Bishop’s reply, “If you are getting into ministry, get in with everything you have or stay away from it. You give everything you are to God and he will use it”. And so it is with us today, we are all in or we are not in at all. Being a true disciple is a lifetime commitment.

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