

Discipleship: The Physical Aspect

Romans 12: 1-2

As I think back over my Christian experience, I rejoice for those who were compelled to serve the Lord and share their faith with the world around them. The Gospel was presented to me by one who had determined to serve the Lord and share the good news. His obedience was certainly influential in my salvation. As I grew and matured in the Lord there were countless others who were committed to serving the Lord and investing their lives in the lives of others. Where would I be today had it not been for the faithfulness of God's people along the way?

Those who influenced and helped shape my life and yours were simply being obedient to the call of Christ. They heard the call of discipleship and obediently responded. They understood there was more to salvation and being a child of God than simply coasting into heaven when life was over. They sensed the need to share their faith, reaching others for Christ, and continuing to invest in the lives of fellow believers along the way.

I sense a great need among the modern church in regard to discipleship, literally being obedient to the call of Christ to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him. There is a great work to be done and it is largely being ignored by the church. We have folks make a profession of faith in Christ and within a few years of their profession, many of them are nowhere to be found. Churches are filled with immature believers who have never embraced the responsibility of discipleship. As we consider all this, we must shoulder our share of the blame as well. These weaknesses reveal a greater weakness within the church at large. We have failed in our responsibility to discipleship as well.

Over the next few weeks I want to closely examine these verses of Scripture and seek to discover the fundamental [truths](#) they reveal regarding our responsibilities to discipleship. This morning I want to consider: [Discipleship – The Physical Aspect](#).

➤ Before we get into the text, I want to address an area that directly relates to obedient discipleship. Our obedience to follow Christ or refusal to do so effectively is directly related to our view of grace. Now I in no way desire to minimize the grace of God. I know it is by His abundant grace that we are saved. However, I do fear the church's view of grace has become skewed and that has had an adverse effect on our obedience in discipleship.

Take a moment to consider the thoughts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45), a Lutheran pastor and theologian who was hanged by the Nazis in a concentration camp in April of 1945. He determined we view grace in one of two ways: cheap grace or costly grace.

Cheap grace means grace as bargain- basement goods, cut- rate forgiveness, cut- rate comfort, cut- rate sacrament; grace as the church's inexhaustible pantry, from which it is doled out by careless hands without hesitation or limit. It is grace without a price, without costs.

Cheap grace means justification of sin but not of the sinner. Because grace alone does everything, everything can stay in its old ways. ...Thus, the Christian should live the same way the world does. In all things the Christian should go along with the world and not venture (like sixteenth- century enthusiasts) to live a different life under grace from that under sin!

Costly grace is the hidden treasure in the field, for the sake of which people go and sell with joy everything they have. It is the costly pearl, for whose price the merchant sells all that he has; it is Christ's sovereignty, for the sake of which you tear out an eye if it causes you to stumble. It is the call of Jesus Christ which causes a disciple to leave his nets and follow him.

It is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly, because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly, because it condemns sin; it is grace, because it justifies the sinner. Above all, grace is costly, because it was costly to God, because it costs God the life of God's Son—"you were bought with a price"—and because nothing can be cheap to us which is costly to God. Above all, it is grace because the life of God's Son was not too costly for God to give in order to make us live. God did, indeed, give him up for us. Costly grace is the incarnation of God.¹

Our view of discipleship will certainly be affected by our view of grace, whether we view it as cheap grace or costly grace. Now let's get into the text considering: [Discipleship – The Physical Aspect](#). First of all we discover:

I. The Application (1) – [I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.](#) Did you notice to whom Paul is speaking? There can be no doubt he is talking to the church, to the believer. He addressed the [brethren](#) in the text. Paul is speaking to those who are born again in Christ, those who have been saved by His marvelous, costly grace. Paul is speaking to all who claim Christ as their Lord and Savior!

- If you are born again, saved by the grace of God, you have been called to serve the Lord and follow Him. All believers are called to be a disciple of Christ our Lord. The responsibility of

discipleship is not reserved for the pastor, deacons, Sunday school teachers, or mature believers. All who belong to Christ are called to be His disciples. We are called to serve the Lord, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Him!

II. The Activity (1) – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.** Paul admonishes the brethren (every believer) to present our bodies a living sacrifice. We are literally expected to offer ourselves unto the Lord for His service. There can be no doubt the Lord desires and expects physical action on our part. It is impossible to present our bodies, in any form or fashion, if we are not there in a physical sense. Discipleship requires physical action!!

- I would never seek to diminish the need for prayer or deny its effectiveness, but Paul reveals simply praying for discipleship will not fulfill our obligation. Have you ever said or heard someone say, “I can’t be there, but I will be there in spirit.” I know the context of that statement must be considered, but being there in thought or spirit does not fulfill the physical requirement for discipleship. If we only think of sharing our faith, or go no further than praying for opportunities to be used of the Lord, we will never physically do those things we know we need to do.

- Having good intentions is wonderful, but good intentions do not translate into discipleship. We must be willing to physically embrace the responsibility to serve the Lord with our bodies! I would not have been saved the day I was had there only been an intention to share the Gospel. Our faith and desire to serve the Lord must motivate us to action; otherwise we are viewing grace as cheap rather than costly!

III. The Affirmation (1) – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.** Paul reveals the Lord is not being unreasonable. This is not something we should view as unbearable or beyond the realm of human ability. This is simply our reasonable service; it is simply the minimum requirement. Reasonable has the idea of “*rational or logical.*” Service speaks of “*our worship or the work of ministry.*”

- We view many things in life as a reasonable service. We know if we are to have food on the table, shelter over our heads, and clothes on our backs we must work in order to provide those things. It may not always be enjoyable, but we view it as reasonable. God has not asked that we perform some great work apart from Him. We are simply asked to be available and active in service to Him.

- Take a moment to consider this thought. If you owed a large debt you couldn't pay and someone else graciously paid the debt for you, would you not feel indebted to be of service to that person in any way you possibly could? That would be viewed as reasonable. What if you were dying of some dreaded disease and another offered to give their life so you could live, would you not feel obligated to honor that great sacrifice? That would be reasonable wouldn't it? Take a moment to consider all Jesus did for us. Surely He is worthy of our service! Surely He is worthy of our commitment to serve Him and seek to share the good news with others! That is simply our reasonable service. Costly grace secured our salvation and costly grace will motivate us to act.

IV. The Attention (2a) – [And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.](#) Discipleship will never be achieved through a casual, unconcerned attitude. We must realize the physical requirements involved. If we are to be effective in service unto the Lord, we must make the proper preparations and diligently seek to serve Him. If there is no desire to be used of the Lord, we will never find ourselves within the field of harvest.

- A genuine disciple must watch where he goes, the company he keeps, and the activities he engages in. He must determine to avoid the lusts of the flesh and the pull of the world. We cannot embrace the world and live as it does and be used of Christ. We must reject the pull of compromise and conformity, seeking rather to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. There must be a desire and commitment to view life and its purpose from a godly perspective! Cheap grace says there is no need to live differently than the world. Costly grace says we must guard our lives and seek to honor Christ as we serve Him! [2 Cor.6:14-17 – Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ^{\[15\]} And what concord \(*agreement*\) hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ^{\[16\]} And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ^{\[17\]} Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you.](#)

V. The Approach (2b) – [And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.](#) Paul well understood the physical relationship to the spiritual. Clearly we must be willing to engage physically in service to Christ, but our approach has to be measured. We must ensure we are sowing in a fertile field. I have known folks who went on Monday night visitation just for the sake of going. There was no prayer or preparation put into the work. They were physically active, but it produced little, if any, fruit.

- God expects us to use our physical bodies in service to Him, but He also expects us to seek His guidance as we serve Him. We must be willing to follow God as He leads us. I have felt led of the Lord to visit a particular home and discovered the Spirit had already been at work prior to my arrival.
- God has a plan and purpose for each of our lives, but we must seek Him through prayer and the reading of Scripture to discern that perfect will. Individual believers and corporate congregations will not reap the harvest if we are not working in the right field. Christ gave His life for the sin of humanity and we are charged to share the Gospel, but we must seek the Lord and His wisdom as we go forth.

Conclusion: I think the majority here today would agree there is a great need for discipleship within the modern church. Our communities are filled with those who do not know Christ as their Savior. We have the good news to share and we are expected to do so. Society continues to deteriorate and we have the remedy.

May I ask a personal question? How long has it been since you personally shared your faith with someone? Maybe you are here and you know you have been saved, but you have never physically approached someone and shared what Christ has done for you. Maybe you are faithful to put money in the offering plate, but as of yet have been unwilling to be used physically for the Lord. Christ desires all believers to be active disciples. That is impossible apart from physical activity.

Maybe you are here and you do not know Christ as your Savior. He died that you might live. He wants you to be saved and follow Him as well. If you are lost in sin, come to Christ as He leads. Christian, if you are struggling with being a true disciple, come and seek the Lord to equip you for service!

ⁱ BONHOEFFER, DIETRICH *Discipleship*
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. (e-Book – Olive Tree Bible Study)