

## “Proofs of Genuine Discipleship”

Luke 6:46-49

At the beginning of the previous century, Dr. Maltbie Babcock was the distinguished pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York. One day Dr. Babcock was approached by a physician, a member of his congregation, who was concerned about his health. The physician handed some theater tickets to Dr. Babcock and said, “Here, take these. You need the recreation of going to this play.” As Dr. Babcock looked at the tickets he saw they were to a play of the kind he could not conscientiously attend. So he turned to his physician friend and said kindly, “Thank you, but I can’t take them. I can’t go.” “Why not?” the physician asked.

“Well doctor, it’s this way. You’re a physician; in fact you’re a surgeon. When you operate, you scrub your hands meticulously until you are especially clean. You wouldn’t dare operate with dirty hands, would you? You see, I’m a servant of Christ. I deal with precious human souls, and I wouldn’t dare to do my service with a dirty life.”

Now I suppose that Dr. Babcock would be roundly criticized by many people today for his “narrow-mindedness.” He’d be told to “lighten up a little.” Shouldn’t he go and see what the members of the congregation were seeing so he could better relate to them? Wasn’t it ungrateful of him to refuse this generous offer from a member of the congregation he led?

But Dr. Babcock evidently took his calling seriously. He embraced the words of the Psalmist, David, who said, “*I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when will you come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. **I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.***”

The final verses of Luke chapter six remind me of the closing argument or summation in a court case. All the details of the case have been presented in earlier testimony. All the evidence has been entered into the record. The closing argument zeroes in on the primary issue at hand.

Earlier in the chapter, Luke records the specifics of Jesus’ teaching. His teaching was directly opposite of the conventional wisdom of His day – and ours too! It was direct, clear, and to the point. The statements He made and the way He made them leave little room for discussion. In fact, all we can do is respond; in one of two ways.

Now, here’s that closing argument in the Word of God from Luke 6:46 to 49.

In this text, Jesus highlights two PROOFS of genuine discipleship.

The First PROOF is,

### **Obedience**

Jesus begins this section of teaching by asking a penetrating question; “Why do you call me Lord (or Master), and do not do the things I say?” Note that the word Lord (*kurios*) is repeated- “Lord, Lord.” In the Greek language, that repetition increases the impact. Calling someone lord was a title of honor that expressed respect and reverence. In that day it was the way servants greeted their master. It acknowledged that you belonged to someone who had the power of decision, that is, they could tell you what you must do.

To call someone lord was to acknowledge their superior rank or authority. You didn’t refer to your equals or those below you on the socio-economic scale as lord. No, the term was reserved for those who could exercise some authority over you.

I remember well the words of a dear older brother who was a wonderful Bible teacher. He is now with the Lord. Regarding this issue of calling Jesus, Lord, he said “You can’t say ‘No Lord;’ because if you say no, Jesus is not your Lord.”

So Jesus’ question alerts us to the fact that “sayin’ so, don’t make it so.” Now it’s true, the Scriptures clearly teach the need for a verbal confession of faith. Romans 10:9 and 10 states; *“That if you shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

It’s also true that the verbal confession cannot be made lightly. Paul said in First Corinthians 12:3; *“I want you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.”*

But there’s more to it than just a verbal acknowledgement. First John 2:4 reminds us that, *“He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* The whole epistle of James warns us again and again about the perils of intellectual spiritual knowledge that is not applied to life.

In our day, this tendency to call Jesus Lord and yet ignore His commands is very pronounced. The message is proclaimed as “Just trust Jesus for your salvation and you’ll become

His child.” That’s true, as far as it goes; that’s the initial act of acknowledging and confessing sin, and repenting of the same. But Jesus teaching, here in Luke six and the teaching of the apostles in many other places, makes it clear that taking that step is only the beginning. Yet those who teach the need for discipleship are often accused of being legalistic or teaching a “works” based salvation. Does that make Jesus a legalist?

In answer to His own question in verse 48, Jesus gave them an easily understood illustration. And he used a word that should resonate with our young people. He said, “The one who hears my teaching, and obeys it is...like...” And then He went on to give the illustration comparing two different men who took on the task of building a house.

It is quite probable that these houses looked very similar. In that era, unless you were very wealthy, a house was very utilitarian. That is, it was constructed in the most economical way to meet the needs of your family. So a person who happened to walk by these two structures wouldn’t have noticed any significant difference between them.

What are we to take from this? Professing Christians (both genuine and bogus) often look alike. You cannot easily tell which is which. Both appear to be building Christian lives. You see, Jesus is not contrasting professing Christians with non-Christians who make no profession. On the contrary, what is common to both spiritual house builders is that they *hear these words of mine*. Both are members of the visible Christian community. Both read the Bible, go to church, listen to sermons and buy Christian literature and Christian music.

But, the obedience rendered by one, and the lip-service rendered by the other will eventually be revealed. How? Well, that leads us to the second proof of true discipleship.

The Second PROOF is,

### **Endurance**

Jesus said that the person who hears His words and obeys them is like a man who built his house on a solid foundation. Picture two men deliberately selecting building sites, but one chooses carefully and prepares his foundation; the one builds haphazardly. He doesn’t have time for “theology and doctrine.” He’s just going to follow Jesus. The obedient person dug through the sand or topsoil and “went deep” to lay the foundation for his house on solid rock. He knows that **ideas have consequences and faith must be rooted in truth.**

To give you some idea about what this involved, I quote from John Kitto's "Pictorial Bible." Kitto had the unusual privilege of traveling to the Middle East during the early 1800s, a time when travel was something enjoyed only by a wealthy few. He had no more than three years of formal education, but eventually became the author of 23 books. Just knowing that makes me want to read his biography. [Charles Spurgeon](#) considered one of Kitto's books, the *Daily Bible Illustrations*, to be "more interesting than any novel that was ever written, and as instructive as the heaviest theology."

Now here is Kitto's quote about building in Bible lands. "At this very day the mode of building in Christ's own town of Nazareth suggest the source of this image. Dr. Robinson was entertained in the house of a Greek Arab. The house had just been built, and was not yet finished. In order to lay the foundations he had dug down to the solid rock, as is usual throughout the country here, to the depth of thirty feet, and then built up arches."

We are talking about some serious effort to dig down 30 feet without the aid of modern equipment! Why so much effort? Well, in our modern-day throw-away society, we may have trouble understanding this. In that day people were connected to the land much more than what we are today. Many people today are "rootless." They have no connections beyond the here and now- and in their minds, none to the hereafter. But in that time a house would be passed down from generation to generation.

Jesus' teaching makes it very clear that being a disciple of Christ calls for some major effort. It is true; salvation is a FREE gift from God. You can't earn it in any way, shape, or fashion. What Jesus is stressing, however, is that those who truly hear the gospel and profess faith will **always** obey him, expressing their faith in their works. The apostles of Jesus never forgot this teaching and it is prominent in their letters.

Obedience to God's Word establishes a foundation for endurance of a godly life. The lack of foundation undermines the endurance of a godly life. And how was the difference of the two houses revealed? It was revealed by the storms of life. And what are the storms of life?

We often identify them as major illnesses, financial reverses, untimely deaths, and things like that. And those certainly are storms. But what about the things Jesus mentioned earlier in this chapter? What about loving our enemies, blessing those who persecute us (though we know

very little about that), going the second mile, and refusing to demand the return of our goods? Aren't those storms too? Or do you find it easy to do those things?

The picture Jesus gives is that the person who has cultivated a life of obedience will be able to stand the battering of the strong current that washes against his house. He doesn't just look good on the outside; there is substance that undergirds his appearance. His true self is revealed under the pressure of the current. He has internalized the Gospel, the good news, and it guides every decision he makes.

I remind you that this analogy of a house or building is used of individuals and of the church. Ephesians 2:19 to 22 tells us; *“Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; **And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.**”*

This man who carefully laid a foundation for his house has learned the value of being closely connected to the Word and to the Church. He knows there are no successful spiritual “lone rangers.” He knows how vulnerable he is on his own; how prone to neglect spiritual disciplines in favor of his own pleasure.

He knows the value of spending time in the Word and prayer. He knows he can't afford to skip out on Sunday School and Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Not because he wants to make a good impression, but because he needs the interaction with other Believers to stir him up to love and good works. And as he takes what he learns in those settings and applies it to his life, his foundation is made yet stronger. And he knows too, that foundation will protect the other occupants of his house, i.e. his family.

On the other hand, we have the man who hears but refuses to obey. As I said, his house looks much the same on the outside. But when the storms of life come surging against it, it collapses immediately! The term used here is actually from the medical field (no surprise Luke would choose such a word) and refers to a part of the body collapsing or shriveling. That's bad enough, but the last clause of this verse is the truly scary part.

*“And the ruin of that house was great.”* The fracturing of that household was great (*megas*). That is a tragic picture! Not only is the building destroyed but the occupants are swept away by the current.

My friend, I am grieved by the number of “houses” I see collapsing today. And I know God is grieved too. God has provided for us “everything that we need for life and godliness.” He has “given us exceeding great and precious promises, that through them we might escape the corruption that is in the world through our lusts” II Peter 2:3 and 4.

But we often feel like it’s too much work; it takes too much time and effort to build that foundation. Besides it makes us seem out-of-touch with our peers. So we take the easy way, the comfortable way, the way that looks good – for awhile. Then the storms come; possessions are lost, relationships are shattered, families are broken up and occupants of the destroyed house are swept away into a life of spiritual, emotional, and physical ruin. Sadly, it’s often eternal ruin.

Earlier in this chapter Jesus reminded His hearers that a fruit tree always bears fruit according to its nature. A good tree bears good fruit and a corrupt tree bears corrupt fruit. A good man’s heart is revealed by his choices and so is the heart of an evil man.

So my friend, you and I can make whatever claim we want about being a disciple of Jesus. But remember these words from the one whom you and I call our master. “If you call me Lord, Lord, and do not obey my sayings your hypocrisy will be revealed and your life will end in utter ruin.”

If that’s where you are today, there’s still time to change direction; there’s still time to begin building that foundation – by committing yourself to a life of faithful obedience to the commands of Jesus. If you do, Jesus promises that you will have a lasting house, a house that will stand the test of time and reach into eternity.

Are these two proofs of genuine discipleship evident in your life?