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Right Motive in Discipleship.

Any pastor would rejoice if one came to him and said, "I want to be a Christian and am ready to follow Christ everywhere." Every experienced pastor knows what a thrill of joy such words would send to his heart. Ordinarily there would be little disposition to go behind these words and to ask what has led to this decision, what has prompted to this offer so freely made? Usually the eagerness to receive such a convert is not concealed, as the session is hastily summoned and he is added to the number of professing Christians.

But a man came to the Saviour once and volunteered to be his disciple. He said, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." He was not apparently sought after, as many of the disciples were, whom Jesus called directly. But he came without urgency and avowed his readiness to be a follower of Christ. He is not an inquirer, but one convinced already. When the multitude regarded Christ with indifference, how noble the conduct of this man seems to be, as he comes forward freely to offer himself as a disciple!

But how strange the reception he meets. Surely these earnest words of his will find a warm welcome in the heart of the Saviour, and he will be hailed as an accession to the number of the disciples. But the only reply is, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." These words do not seem to answer his eager proposal. But if they did not answer his words, they answered the feelings of his heart. He who could search hearts gave an answer to what he saw there and not to what he heard from the lips of the scribe. He had come to Christ with bright visions of a glorious Kingdom, about to be established. The prevalent opinion of the Jews was that when the Messiah would come, they would be freed from their foreign oppressors and enjoy prosperity beyond anything their country had ever seen. Convinced that this was the Messiah, what more natural than that this man should indulge in selfish and worldly hopes and attach himself to his disciples, that he might have a share in the future glory of Christ's Kingdom. These words dashed his hopes to the ground. It was as if Jesus had said to him, "You do not know what it is to be my follower. If you are looking for earthly rewards or earthly glory, I have none of these to offer. Even the birds and wild animals have more permanence on earth than I. The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head."

The interview here recorded is instructive to men in all time. Mere good resolutions are not enough in following Christ. Pastors and sessions cannot judge men as Jesus could, for they cannot search hearts. But they can set forth the truth and assist people in the serious work of self-examination. They can help them to discover the proper motives which should govern those who desire truly to follow Christ. If we had more care-

ful and plain teaching on these points, more satisfactory results would follow in many cases. Some have wrong views of religion and set out to follow Christ from wrong motives, and are never undeceived till their Christian profession comes to naught.

What should lead one to follow Christ? Not mere earthly honor. Some seek the praise of man at any price. Such persons may look on religion as a means to an end, something to give them favor with others and a higher standing in their estimation. But the time has been when it was counted folly and superstition to pray and read the Bible and perform the duties of vital religion; and that time may come again. If any would be Christians, let them know that there is no guarantee that the world that did not honor the Master, will give much honor to the disciple. Thirst for honor will never keep any faithful to the end.

It is not for gain, that one should follow Christ. If he thinks he would succeed better in his business or in his profession if connected with the Church, and with this motive cries out, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," let him hear the gentle Saviour saying to him, "If this is what brings you to me, you are doomed to disappointment." Religion does not guarantee success in business and Christ nowhere assures his disciples that they shall certainly get on better because they follow him. It is no strange thing if they do; it is no new thing if prosperity attends those who fear God and honor him. All things work together for their good. But it is not proper to follow Christ for the sake of these earthly advantages. If any one seeks Christ, not for his own sake, but to use his religion to help him to get gain, he is liable to disappointment and discouragement, and then to backsliding.

What is the real motive of true discipleship? It is to follow Christ for his own sake, to rest in him by faith, till love to him moves us to follow him wherever he leads. The soul bound in the bonds of love to Christ will follow him everywhere. It will make religion blend with all the affairs of life, amid afflictions and losses, and also under the sunshine of prosperity. "Can I follow Jesus here?" becomes the test of all business pursuits and social engagements. Such a soul will follow Jesus and follow on, when others turn back and walk no more with him.

This is the principle that must be insisted on in all who would profess Christ and follow him. Never was there a time when faithful teaching was more needful on these essential points. If every volunteer is to be taken into the ranks of Christ's army the effect will be seen in sad desertions in the days of trial. One true soldier is worth ten half-hearted ones. In the anxiety to enlist many, there is need of caution and a demand for the plainest instruction on the vital matters of religion. There is need also for heart searching on the part of all who desire fellowship with Christ and his people. "Let a man examine himself" is not yet an obsolete injunction.

the beginning of the ministry of the Holy Ghost, destined to carry forward, in its universal application, the work of grace begun by Christ himself. The world to-day is reaping the blessing of that fire.

But this is not the thought in the mind of James. While he could give clear and strong testimony that in many instances the tongue was set on fire by the Holy Ghost, he was equally positive in his conviction that in many other cases it was set on fire by the devil. Most persons are inclined to make the heart the cause of the evils and the distressing consequences of life. Some, however, would locate these wicked tendencies and propensities in the brain, while James lays very great stress upon the tongue—if not as the first cause of all this, most surely as the instrument. "The tongue is a fire," says he, "a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." It is a fact, clearly stated by James and abundantly verified in personal experience, that the control of the tongue is equivalent to a perfect life. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." And Solomon says, "Whoso keepeth his tongue keepeth his soul." Any person who has gained the mastery over this one little unruly member, need never despair of rising as conqueror over all else. He is able to do so.

The Church in Philadelphia.

By Rev. Dr. R. M. Patterson.

It was certainly an unpleasant revelation which was made to the Presbytery of Philadelphia at a recent meeting—that though 4,778 new scholars were reported as having been drawn into its Sabbath-schools during the last year, there was a net decrease of 110 in the total membership. An examination of the statistical report of the Superintendent of Sabbath-school Work, in the Minutes of the General Assembly, shows that the case is even worse. Omitting the Home Department, while 12 more schools are reported than were the preceding year, all the schools contain 19 less officers and teachers, and 216 less scholars.

A similar state of things is not exhibited in our Church at large. The reports of all the schools under the General Assembly, in all the departments, show a net increase last year of 19,721 members—from 1,116,280 to 1,136,001. In the Synod of Pennsylvania the net increase was 3,161—from 229,072 to 232,233. Rural Presbyteries even, with little advance in general population, report growth instead of decline.

Connect with the Sabbath-school decline the following facts:

During the century the Presbyterian communicants in the city have increased 92 fold in a general population increase of 19 fold. The Church growth, therefore, has been nearly five times greater proportionally than that of the population. The third in strength of the denominations at the opening of the century passed all the others, and has continued to be the largest. The city is the strongest Presbyterian city in the United States, and the Presbyterian is the strongest denomination in the city. But this great increase was during the nine decades of the century. The closing decade has not kept pace with the preceding forward movement. Between

1890 and 1900 our Church growth was only a little more than one-fourth, or 27 per cent.; while that of the city population was almost one-fourth, or 23.57 per cent. The proportionate growth of the Church only about equal to that of the city! (It should be added that the figures in this paragraph include all the city churches—those in the Philadelphia North Presbytery, as well as the Philadelphia.)

Our Church has not lost its primacy here. It is still the largest of the denominations. It has not ceased to grow; but its growth is not that which has been. Last year (1898-1899) was peculiarly disheartening. Attention was stirred up to it. The reports this year (1899-1900) show an upward change for the better, and should encourage still greater earnestness and faithfulness. The additions on examination were 2,302, larger than last year; but, still, less than the year preceding and than the yearly average for the decade.

What is the cause of the Presbyterian retrogression during the closing decade of the century? What has happened to give our Church such a set-back in these later years? Why the Sabbath-school positive decline, and the lessened growth of the Church itself? Removals to suburban and rural churches do not answer the question.

May a life-long Philadelphia Presbyterian, whose delight it often has been to exploit the growth and strength of Philadelphia Presbyterianism, suggest to the Philadelphia brethren that careful attention should be given to the matter, so as to reach an explanation of the facts, and to enter upon a conscientious removal of weakening influences and an encouragement of active efforts, which, under the blessing of God, may restore our Presbyterianism to the higher plane on which it once stood?

"To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write, . . . hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Ruskin on Education.

To say that John Ruskin attracts more attention in death than he did during the last fifteen years of his life, is not to announce a remarkable fact. It is often the case with very superior men that after having achieved a lofty eminence in fame and influence, their personality becomes obscured and remains in shadow during the later years of their lives, suddenly to emerge into immense prominence as soon as death has sealed their lips forever. What is remarkable about the current revival of Ruskinism is that the world is constantly learning new, or newly discovered, facts, which show the great English art critic of the nineteenth century to have been a many-sided man, to an extent of which even the majority of his most ardent admirers were totally unaware while he lived.

Most people who knew of Ruskin, knew, indeed, that he had some pretty radical notions about the rights and wrongs of workingmen, that he had said brilliant things regarding literary criticism, that he expressed himself with impatient vehemence upon the fashions and foibles of English social life, and that he gave advice to Christian preachers, sometimes in somewhat the tone of an old Hebrew prophet. What people for the most part did not know, but what all whose practice it is to read the best current literature are learning now, is that John