

Marks of a True Disciple

The Commission of the Disciple

What a Disciple Is Sent to Do

Matthew 28:18-20

Over the past several weeks, we have been considering what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We have seen:

- The Call of the Disciple — that Christ calls us to follow Him
- The Cost of the Disciple — that following Him requires surrender
- The Continuance of the Disciple — that a true disciple abides in His Word
- The Love of the Disciple — that we are marked by love one for another
- The Character of the Disciple — that the Spirit produces a distinct life within
- And most recently, The Conduct of the Disciple — how that life is lived out daily

Each of these has shown us what a disciple is...

But now we come to a passage that shows us what a disciple does. Because a disciple is not only one who follows Christ... and not only one who is changed by Christ... A disciple is one who is sent by Christ.

It is possible to study discipleship in such a way that it becomes inward-focused:

- concerned with our walk
- concerned with our growth

- concerned with our relationships

But if we stop there, we miss a critical part of what it means to follow Christ. The One who calls us... and changes us... and teaches us to walk... also sends us.

That is what we find in this passage. These are among the final words the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples before His ascension. They are not casual words... they are not temporary instructions... they are a commission.

I. A COMMAND THAT IS AUTHORIZED — v. 18

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"

Before the Lord Jesus tells His disciples what to do... He establishes who He is.

A. The declaration of His power — "all power..."

1. The word "power" here (ἐξουσία) speaks of authority — the right to rule, to command, to direct. This is sovereign authority.
2. The extent of His power — "all" — no limitation... no exception... no rival authority.

John 17:2

² As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

B. The scope of His authority — "in heaven and in earth"

The authority is universal. There is no realm of existence where His authority does not reach (Col. 1:16-18).

1. In heaven — over angels, powers, and all spiritual realms

2. In earth — over nations, rulers, and all mankind

C. The source of His authority — “is given unto me”

1. This points to His mediatorial authority as the risen Christ. Having completed the work of redemption... having conquered sin and death... He now speaks as the risen, exalted Lord.
2. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Daniel (Dan. 7:13-14).

II. A COMMISSION THAT IS GIVEN — V. 19A

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...”

A. The connection to authority — “Go ye therefore... (v. 19a)

Because Christ has all authority — therefore we are to go. We go under His authority, with His message, and in His name.

To ignore the commission... is not simply to neglect a duty — it is to disregard the authority of Christ Himself.

B. The action required — “Go ye”

1. This carries the idea of going out; moving beyond; taking the message to others.
2. Some have said: “This isn’t a call to remain... not a call to wait... it’s a call to go.” Every disciple is to live with a “going mindset.”

Acts 1:8

⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in

| Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

C. The objective defined — “teach...”

1. This word “teach” (μαθητεύω) is taken from the word for “disciple,” and as used here means, as many have shown, carries the idea of making disciples.
2. This is more than sharing information or producing a response. It is bringing people into a life of following Christ.

In other words, the goal is disciples — not just decisions, professions, or outward responses.

D. The scope declared — “all nations”

This is a universal call — not limited to one place or one people.

Mark 16:15

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Luke 24:47

⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

E. The implication for the disciple

This means:

1. No believer is without responsibility
2. No place is outside the reach of the gospel
3. No person is beyond the authority of Christ

F. The balance that must be maintained

This guards against two errors:

1. A Christianity that is inward only — focused on growth without mission
2. A Christianity that is shallow — focused on decisions without discipleship

III. A CONVERSION THAT IS DECLARED — V. 19B

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”

This answers the question as to how that discipleship is identified and expressed.

A. The place of baptism in the commission

Notice the order: make disciples; baptize them; teach them. Baptism follows discipleship — it does not produce it.

B. The meaning of baptism

Baptism is a public identification with Christ. It is a declaration of faith, a testimony of salvation, and an outward expression of an inward belief.

Romans 6:3–4

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

C. The significance of this declaration

It is the first act of obedience in the life of a disciple.

D. The foundation of the Trinity — “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”

1. To be baptized in the name of means to be identified with the authority and reality of the Triune God.
2. This shows that salvation is the:
 - a) Work of the Father
 - b) Accomplished through the Son
 - c) Applied by the Spirit

E. The public nature of baptism

Baptism is not private — it is a visible, public act.

Matthew 10:32

³² Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

F. The connection to the commission

This reminds us again that the goal is not simply to get people to respond... it is to bring them into a life of open identification with Christ.

IV. THE CONTINUATION THAT IS REQUIRED — VS. 20A

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”

The commission doesn’t end with going... it doesn’t end with baptism... it continues with teaching them.

A. The nature of this teaching — “teaching them...”

1. This is ongoing instruction; a continual process.

2. The word for “teaching” (διδάσκω) has the idea of systematic, ongoing instruction in the Word of God.

B. The goal of this teaching — “to observe...”

1. The goal isn’t only knowledge and information; it is obedience.
2. To “observe” means to keep; practice; live out. This is the difference between hearing truth and obeying truth.

James 1:22

²² But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

3. A disciple is not simply one who knows what Christ said... but one who lives what Christ commanded.

C. The scope of this teaching — “all things whatsoever I have commanded you”

1. This includes the hard commands; the searching commands; the commands that confront our will.
2. A true disciple doesn’t pick and choose what to obey.

John 14:15

¹⁵ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

D. The connection to discipleship

1. There are many who hear the gospel; make a profession; even follow outwardly for a time. But they are never truly taught to “observe all

things.”

2. That is why discipleship must lead to a life shaped by the Word of Christ.

E. The responsibility placed on the disciple

1. This means the commission is not complete when someone is saved. It is not complete when someone is baptized. It continues as long as that person is being taught to follow Christ.
2. Every disciple is both a learner and, in time, a teacher.

2 Timothy 2:2

² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

F. The danger if this is neglected

If this part of the commission is ignored, converts will remain immature; truth will remain shallow; and discipleship remains incomplete.

V. A CONFIDENCE THAT IS ASSURED — v. 20B

“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

A. The certainty of His presence — “lo...”

1. This word is given to draw attention. It is as if the Lord is saying: “Do not miss this.”
2. Before they go, they must understand that they will not go alone.

B. The reality of His presence — “I am with you”

1. The One who has all authority... the One who gave the command... goes with His people.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

2. The disciple is never sent away from Christ — he is sent with Christ.

C. The duration of His presence — “always”

1. This means at all times; in every situation; without interruption.
2. Not only when it is easy.. when it is successful — “always.”

D. The extent of His promise — “even unto the end of the world”

1. This extends beyond the apostles. This promise reaches forward to every generation; to every disciple; to the ongoing work of the church.
2. As long as the commission remains... His presence remains.

E. The encouragement for the disciple

This removes both fear and excuse: fear — because we are not alone; excuse — because we are able and empowered.

Conclusion:

In these final words of the Lord Jesus, we are not simply

given a suggestion... We are given a commission.

- A command authorized by His authority
- A mission given to His disciples
- A conversion declared through baptism
- A continuation required through obedience
- And a confidence assured by His presence

The question isn't, "Do I understand the commission?" The question is, "Am I obeying it?"

- Am I living with a sense that I am sent?
- Am I seeking to make disciples... or simply living for myself?
- Am I investing in others so they might follow Christ?

This is not a command for the few — for the "full-time Christian worker," or those who have the "gift of evangelism. This is the responsibility of every disciple.

And as we come to the final message in this series, we will see that the question is not only whether we have been called... and not only whether we have been sent... but whether our lives truly reflect a consistent, obedient response to Christ.

Before you can be sent, however... you must come.

If you have never trusted Christ as your Saviour... then the call for you today is not first to go— it is to come to Him. To turn from your sin... and place your faith in what He has done for you.

And the promise of Scripture is clear:

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."