

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VII

Issue 42

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

Mark 1:36

Someone has said that "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." I have no doubt that many copy the fashions and practices of others because they admire the one they are imitating. Yet gain of one kind or another is usually at the root of most replication. We live in an age when a new invention can hit the market today and tomorrow the market seems to be flooded with cheap copies of that invention that more or less do what the original does. The American consumer is intent on finding the cheapest deal, even if means settling for inferior quality. We lament the loss of jobs due to the importation of cheap goods and yet we line up day after day to buy them and boast of what a good deal we got.

Satan is the master counterfeiter, transforming himself into an angel of light and he has convinced the human race that the imitation of truth is the same as truth. This is seen clearly in the multitudes of religions that have sprung up, all over the world. He has sold the masses a bill of goods which the more discerning among men (as they think of themselves) would never fall for. Yet his greatest counterfeit is of that which is closest to the truth.

The LORD said that "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" (Mat 7:21-23) These of whom HE was speaking are not immoral profligates, drunkards, or thieves. Rather they are men and women who appeared (even to themselves) to be "working for the LORD", going about doing good deeds. They are the folks who are aware of their conscientious service to HIM.

Yet HE plainly said that they were the "workers of iniquity". We are therefore convinced that iniquity can be found in the church pew, mission field, and bible study group just as surely as in the bawdy house or tavern. Just because a man thinks himself to be a follower of CHRIST does not make it so. Just because a man may even perform some of the same good deeds that the true sons of GOD perform does not mean that HE is a true son of GOD.

When the LORD began HIS ministry, HE was thronged everywhere HE went. As HE fed the multitudes and healed the sick, HIS fame grew, and so did HIS popularity. But as the truth of what HE spoke began to sink in to the minds of these multitudes, one by one they began to fall away and walk no more with him. As long as men thought they could be benefited by HIM, they stuck around. Yet the truth began to weed them out until one day only the twelve were left and the LORD asked them "*Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*" (John 6:67-68)

There has been a concerted effort on the part of religious counterfeiters, over the last hundred years, to convince men that it is by an act of man's free will that he can become a child of GOD and a follower of CHRIST as well. There are even classes taught with the intent

of instructing men and women on how to be the followers of CHRIST. The vast majority of those who call themselves Christians are convinced that they became so by their free choice in cooperating with the supposed "plan of salvation", having made a "decision" to be "saved" as a result of an emotional plea to come forward or raise their hand at the close of a religious meeting or in response to the "presentation" of a well meaning "soul winner".

Many of these same folks have been convinced that they are now the followers of CHRIST because someone else has assured them that they are. GOD is quite able to call HIS own children in HIS own time by whatever means or lack thereof that HE may see fit to use. HE alone can cause a man to become a follower of CHRIST and HE alone can keep those whom HE thus calls from falling, without the aid of men in any way

While there are many imitation followers of CHRIST, there are also those who are the true followers (disciples) of CHRIST. They can be known by the fact that:

They have one allegiance. CHRIST is the only one that they will follow. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:" (John 10:27)* Since HE knows them, HE calls them by name and HE leads them in and out where they find pasture. *"The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:3-5)*

They seek one source of truth. Even as Peter said, *"Thou hast the words of eternal life."* HIS followers are not seeking out prophets, gurus, and seers but they desire to hear HIM. They are those who shall not be turned aside from following CHRIST by those who are false christs and deceivers.

When HE calls they answer. When HE called the twelve by name, HE did not request that they make a decision, HE simply said follow me and they were compelled to do so. It is no different with any other of HIS sheep, HE calleth them all by name and they all hear HIS voice. *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." (John 6:37)*

They follow HIM not for loaves and fishes. The cry of the counterfeits is to try and persuade men to follow CHRIST for the benefit that it will be to them. They promise blessings in this life and an escape from hell. The religious multitudes are seeking their own benefit but the true followers of CHRIST do so because they can do nothing else. Even as Job of old expressed the necessity of his trust, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15)*

They follow HIM because they are HIS sheep. HE said to the Pharisees, *"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:26-27)* The LORD did not come into the world to make goats into sheep but to gather the sheep of HIS own pasture, those which were given to HIM before the foundation of the world, which are those HE came to seek and to save. The text says *"And Simon and they that were with him followed after him" Mark 1:36.* It is speaking directly about the fact that they were with him in HIS daily ministry, but there is also a greater and more glorious lesson that we might learn as well.

The elect of GOD were "with HIM" before the foundation of the world. There has never been a time when HE did not love them with an everlasting love nor that HE was not united to them as their elder BROTHER and REDEEMER. They have been HIS before the mountains were brought forth or the seas were placed within their bounds. It is for them that HE came into the world and subjected HIMSELF to the sentence of death in their behalf.

They follow HIM because HE loves them. *"We love him, because he first loved us." (1John 4:19)* HE has manifested that love by HIS actions, *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8)*

They love one another. This is really the truest test of whether or not a man is a follower of CHRIST. If we do love HIM we will love the brethren. (see I John 4:20) *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35)* Those that do not cherish the people of GOD cannot be HIS followers regardless of their creed.