

DISCIPLESHIP

**Have You
Counted
the
Cost?**

Luke
14:
25-
35

I. THE CONFUSED MULTITUDES (14:25) ***"And there went great multitudes with him . . ."***:

- A. At this point in the life of our Lord, He had been rejected as Messiah of Israel, and the vast majority of the people were following the leaders in Jerusalem rather than the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Now that He has been rejected by the majority, it is going to be at a great cost of discipleship for the few that follow Him. NOTE: Undoubtedly many of these had professed faith in Jesus Christ, and He throws out a challenge to test the reality of their faith.
- B. The multitudes were following Jesus, for it was popular with some to be identified with a radical cause. These professing disciples were probably shouting their slogans of allegiance to Christ and giving an impressive demonstration of their loyalty to Him (John 2:23-25). But Christ knew their hearts and the superficiality of their faith.
- C. Some in this multitude were undoubtedly genuine believers, but the majority were "just along for the ride." Some were probably following our Lord for religious motives, thinking perhaps He was Messiah. Some were "thrill seekers" who were taken up with His miracles. Some followed for political reasons, hoping that Christ would overthrow the Roman government. Some followed for personal reasons; perhaps they were curious, wanting their ears tickled, or selfish, wanting only their bellies fed. Whatever their motives, Jesus knew their hearts and rejected the vast majority of these professing disciples. He knew that nothing does so much damage to the cause of true religion as backsliding, and that nothing causes so much backsliding as enlisting disciples without warning them of the cost of discipleship. So, in a determined tone, Christ lays down His absolute demands for everyone who wishes to be His disciple and true follower. The purpose of these parables is to reveal false Christianity and to weed out false professors of Jesus Christ. People must be warned of self-deception and clearly

understand that feelings are not faith and convictions are not saving grace.

The world is not changed by the masses but by committed people. In 1918, a small group of men gathered together in a small brewery in Germany in order to discuss political aspirations. These men were the nucleus for the Nazi Party which would soon dominate Germany and bring tyranny to the world. Among this small group of men was Adolf Hitler. He saw a group of men who were energetic, dedicated and pliable and he seized upon the occasion to put forth his political views. Hitler addressed them and confronted them with this challenge: "Give me men," he said, "fifty men who have no will of their own; fifty men who are willing to follow me; fifty men who are desirous of total commitment, and I will conquer the world." He almost did it!

II. THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP (14:26a) "***If any man come to me . . .***"

- A. Christ speaks of men coming to Him and is referring to their coming for salvation with a desire to be His followers. One must clearly understand that there is a price to be paid to follow Christ. Jesus leaves this open to any man. He will lay out the rules, expecting the true disciple to adhere to them. He will not pressure the person who wants to follow, but from those who do follow He demands undivided loyalty and submission to Himself. NOTE: Every man is called to discipleship separately and must follow alone. Christ compels men to make a radical breach with the past and be separated unto Him. He wants to be the center of all things and through Him we are to be related to the present world. When one leaves the world system to follow Christ, this makes him a real individual. Bonhoeffer says,

It is not for us to choose which way we shall follow. That depends upon the will of Christ. But this at least is certain: in one way or the other we shall have to leave the immediacy of the world and become individuals . . . (The Cost of Discipleship).

- B. Jesus said, "***Let him come after me.***" Being a disciple not only means inward commitment to Christ but also outward attachment to Him. Unsaved men must know we are followers of Christ. Discipleship means that we are devoted to the person of Jesus Christ alone. Our devotion does not belong to a local church or an ecclesiastical organization or to humanitarian societies, but to Jesus Christ. He is inviting disciples to learn from Him, to obey His words and to identify themselves with His cause. Discipleship means adherence to a person, not a system. It is not legalism that motivates to faithful service, but Christ. NOTE: Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. NOTE: A disciple and a believer are one and

the same thing. There are degrees of discipleship, but all true Christians are disciples.

III. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP STATED NEGATIVELY (14:26b)

- A. **". . . and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters . . ."** -- Jesus asks for a severance of life's dearest ties. He demands loyalty to Him above our families. The Lord is not saying that we should hate our parents or wife after conversion. He is being emphatic and saying He must be first. If there is a conflict between our loved ones and doing the will of God, then we must follow Christ and believe that God will change the hearts of our loved ones. It is a matter of loyalty to Christ above loyalty to family. NOTE: It is a heavy burden to disagree with those we love, and especially about spiritual things. The Christian, if he has conflict in the family, will seek peace and will make as many concessions as he can without compromising his duty to God. Yet he can never forget Christ's words, **"He who loves father or mother . . . son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"** (Matt. 10:35-37). As disciples, we must do what is right, not what is expedient. We should be aware of the fact that often one of the greatest foes to true discipleship is one's own family. Unsaved fathers and mothers cannot bear the thought of their sons and daughters taking up what they think are new and radical views of life and separating from what they see as the gaiety and fun of the world. When this time comes, a true Christian must be willing to offend his family rather than offend Christ. Multiple Christians will praise God in the final judgment because they had relatives and families and chose to displease them rather than Christ on this earth. That very decision was the first thing that made them think seriously and led finally to the conversion of their souls. NOTE: Following Christ is to be a wholehearted business and all other things must take second place.
- B. **". . . yea, and his own life also . . ."** -- Jesus asks for sacrifice of self. To follow Him means to renounce self-will, to surrender one's rights. It is not to deny things to oneself, but to deny oneself to oneself. It is to say no to self and yes to Christ. NOTE: Jesus asks us to surrender the person we love most--OURSELF! This is what really hurts -- not only denial of others but that which one holds dearest--HIMSELF.
- C. **". . . he cannot be my disciple."** -- This is a sobering and staggering statement, but our Lord means what He says. If we are not willing to put Christ above and beyond all other things and persons, we cannot qualify to be a disciple of His.

IV. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP STATED POSITIVELY (14:27)

- A. **"And whosoever doth not bear his cross . . ."** -- Every single day the true disciple is to bear a cross for Christ (Luke 9:23). Daily the disciple must renounce his own rights and will and unconditionally surrender to Christ's sovereign will in his life. Every Jewish hearer knew what it meant to take up a

cross. They had witnessed hundreds of Roman executions in which many prisoners were crucified. The condemned prisoner was forced to carry that heavy cross through the public streets and out to a hill on the outskirts of the town. As the prisoner carried the cross, he would be mocked and scorned and his fate would ultimately be death. NOTE: Jesus is saying that the Christian must be willing to be mocked for the cause of Christ. Unbelieving men will call Christians bigots, narrow-minded, fanatics, uneducated, demon possessed and crazy as we go to tell the world about the salvation which is found in Jesus Christ. Public ridicule will be a part of being a genuine disciple of Christ.

- B. ". . . **and come after me . . .**" -- A person, by an act of his own will, must desire to come after Jesus Christ. A disciple is unconditionally committed to the will of God for his life. NOTE: There can be no holding back. Our attitude should be, "What He says we will do; when He speaks we will listen; where He sends we will go."

Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself have founded empires, but upon what did those creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone established His empire upon love. I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me. . . but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly presents with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. Christ alone has succeeded in raising the mind of men toward the Unseen, that it become insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy. He asks for the human heart. He will have it entirely for and to Himself. He demands it unconditionally. (Napoleon Bonaparte)

V. THE CONTEMPLATION OF DISCIPLESHIP (14:28-32)

- A. **"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."** -
- This is known as the Parable of the Tower Builder. The point is quite simple: Do not begin the act of discipleship if you cannot finish it. If a person, after contemplating the cost of discipleship, sees that he does not have the ability to persevere, then it is better not to start. The person who begins and then quits will be mocked and bring shame on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. NOTE: This verse does not say that a disciple is to be perfect (for all Christians fall very

short of perfection), but he is not to be a quitter! Christ is not saying that a man has the ability in himself to be a disciple, for all men feel inadequate to be true disciples. The disciple must and will draw his strength from Christ to live the Christian life. However, he must realize that Christianity is a life of commitment. John R. W. Stott says,

The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers -- the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. Thousands of men and women every year are still undertaking to follow Christ without every pausing to reflect on the cost of their enterprise. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called "nominal Christianity." They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as an escape from reality. (Basic Christianity)

- B. ***"Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace."*** -- This is the Parable of the King Going to War. The point of this parable is that the life of discipleship is a life of warfare. Before we take our lives and the Christian cause against what seems to be the overwhelming odds of the world, we must count the cost and make whatever sacrifices are necessary to win the battle for Christ and His kingdom. If we do not, we will find ourselves making peace with the world system and compromising the Christian faith,

VI. THE CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP (14:33)

- A. ***"So likewise, whoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath . . ."*** -- The word "forsake" means to renounce or set apart or say goodbye to. This is a present tense in the Greek which means that this forsaking is to be a continual process. Obviously total discipleship does not come overnight but it begins with a commitment to Christ. Discipleship is a process, but it demands a willing heart on the part of the person to please only the Lord Jesus Christ. NOTE: Christ is speaking here about material possessions. Forsaking things deals with a person's attitude towards them, a willingness or desire to let them go if called by Christ to do so. To renounce all, for the majority of Christians, does not mean a physical departure from

home or job. Yet it includes an inner surrender of both, and a refusal to allow family affection, worldly ambition, or materialistic pleasure to occupy the first place in the heart. Discipleship does not mean that we must go live in a convent, nor leave a nice home or a good job, nor does it mean that Christians cannot have money and material things. It means that they are not to be obsessed with these things and must be willing to give them up if Christ asks them to do so. Discipleship deals with our inner motivations about material things and whether Christ is first.

- B. "**. . . he cannot be my disciple,**" -- The Lord makes it clear that it costs to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. NOTE: Of course it costs to be a disciple, but it costs much more not to be, for without discipleship one declares with his life that he is an unbeliever with no real desire to please Christ. Discipleship means temporary anguish at times in one's life, but no discipleship means the loss of eternal life. Once possessed, eternal life can never be lost, but there are many professing Christians who have no desire for discipleship who have never been saved and been possessors of this life. Those who are genuinely saved will desire to be disciples.

VII. THE NECESSITY FOR CONTINUANCE IN DISCIPLESHIP (14:34-35)

- A. "**Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out.**" -- This is the Parable of the Salt. When salt has lost its qualities, it is fit for nothing. Dedicated Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. When professing Christians begin on the road of discipleship and turn back, they are fit for nothing. But when the Christian goes on in discipleship, his light will so shine before men that they will see that Jesus Christ is real and the only way of salvation. NOTE: No man is in a more dangerous state as he who has once known the truth and professed to love it and afterwards has fallen away from his profession and gone back to the world. This backslider may well be on the verge of apostasy. He has become hardened in his heart to Christ. You can tell him nothing he does not know, show him no doctrine he has not heard. When challenged to a good life, he laughs. He has not sinned ignorantly but willfully, all because he did not count the cost of discipleship before turning to Christ.
- B. "**He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**" -- God must grant the grace to see the spiritual lessons in discipleship which is not just something nice for a Christian to do but is absolutely necessary for the Christian to prove or demonstrate the reality of his faith by the commitment of his life to Christ.