

164 THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP. Luke 9:26; Mt. 10:33; Mk. 8:38

Three conditions of discipleship:

1. Self-denial
2. Bearing one's cross
3. Obedience

This kind of self-denial is much more than making some small sacrifices or giving up some interests or possessions of pleasures.

It means a radical reorientation of life:

- with the self no longer at the center
- with the will of God at the center
- the will of God takes the place of our own will

Jesus knew he was going to the cross and to death.

He invites his apostles to go with him --

to share the suffering and the rewards.

When we bear our cross, it means bearing His cross with him.

Our self-denial and cross-bearing are useless and morbid unless they are done for Christ's sake -- unless they are required by our faithfulness to the Lord.

To follow Christ means to follow him to the Cross of suffering, but it is not something we bring upon ourselves.

That is not Christian discipleship; it is what psychologists call masochism; it is not redemptive or normal; it is perverted and destructive.

But to bear patiently and faithfully what God puts on us is glorious.

Confessing Christ/ Matt. 10:32.

Whenever a person confesses Christ on earth, Christ confesses that person before the throne of God.

But PUBLIC PROFESSION is required: Before men.

You have heard people say: "I don't profess to be a Christian, BUT...." What he means is, "I admire Christ's ethic in some ways, but I prefer a half confession plus a half worldliness to any public profession or allegiance."

But it is impossible to be half pagan and half Christian.

It is not logical to say, "All religions are equally true." They can't be equally true when they contradict each other in their views of life, and truth cannot contradict itself.

The Christian has to burn his bridges behind him and say, "I take Christ alone as my Savior and Lord; I will trust Him with all my heart, no matter what happens."

There is great danger in a half profession, or a secret profession. Jesus requires a public profession, even if it costs the disciple his or her death.

And there have been many times in the history of the world when it cost just that, and it may be that way in certain parts of the world in our own day.

There is joy and gladness in heaven whenever anyone makes a brave public confession of faith in Christ.

When we say, "I believe in Christ," then Christ says in heaven, "I believe in and own this person as my child and disciple." Heaven is watching our every move.

This public profession is the essential stuff of religion. Anything less than that is not worthy of our Great Savior.

~~worldly man~~
John Bunyan tells the story of a ~~Mr. By-ends~~, from the town of Fairspeech, who wanted to join Christian and Hopeful in their pilgrimage to the Celestial City. He claimed to be religious in a way, but he said, "We never strive against Wind and Tide.... We are always most zealous when Religion goes in his Silver Slippers; we love much to walk with him in the street, if the sun shines, and the people applaud it."

To him Christian answered: "If you will go with us, you must go against wind and tide, ... You must also own Religion in his rags, as well as when in his silver slippers, and stand by him too, when bound in irons, as well as when he walketh the streets with applause."

- Ashamed of Jesus

- All for Jesus

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Cost of Discipleship

As surely as salvation cost Christ His life, it will cost us our precious will and pride and much more.

The way of the cross is the way of self-denial, the way of cross-bearing, and the way of obedience. We sometimes hear people speak of their burdens and problems as their cross.

Some are married to a crotchety, ^{and senile} old man or woman, and they say, "That's my cross."

Or they have a sick child, and they say, "Well, that's my cross."

Or they lose their job and say, "That's my cross." Indeed, it is NOT!

Taking up your cross and following Christ is a VOLUNTARY surrendering of your will to His;

it is not a misfortune which you could not avoid.

Once someone asked General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, about how he was able to do what he did for the Lord and the poor of London.

He said, "I'm not the brightest man in London, and I'm not the man who has had the most opportunities, but I have given God all there is of me."

What do you suppose would happen if every one of us would give God all there is of us?

It's high time Christians stopped complaining about their lack of talents, resources, and opportunities, and started giving their all to Jesus.