

# Called to Be Disciples

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## *Scripture Reading:*

*Luke 14:25-35—And great crowds went with him; [our Lord Jesus] and, turning round, he said to them, If any man come to me, and shall not hate his own father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple; and whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desirous of building a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, if he have what is needed to complete it; in order that, having laid the foundation of it, and not being able to finish it, all who see it do not begin to mock at him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish? Or what king, going on his way to engage in war with another king, does not, sitting down first, take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him coming against him with twenty thousand? and if not, while he is yet far off, having sent an embassy, he asks for terms of peace. Thus then every one of you who forsakes not all that is his own cannot be my disciple. Salt then is good, but if the salt also has become savorless, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is proper neither for land nor for dung; it is cast out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

*Matthew 10:34-39—Do not think that I have come to send peace*

*upon the earth: I have not come to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter with her mother, and the daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law; and they of his household shall be a man's enemies. He who loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it.*

Our Lord Jesus came into this world to seek and to save the lost. While He was on earth He traveled from city to city, from village to village. He preached the gospel to the poor because He came to save the lost. But as you read the gospels you find that many times when great multitudes surrounded Him, after He ministered to them He usually dismissed them, and sometimes He Himself left. Now this is something very strange because usually if you are able to get a crowd you will try to keep them with you. But when the Lord

got a crowd, He dismissed them.

You remember the story in John 6 of the many multitudes who came to hear our Lord Jesus. The Lord used five loaves and two fishes to feed five thousand. After He fed them, He dismissed them because they wanted to make Him king. They thought that He was a person who could solve their food problem. As a matter of fact, He had to persuade His disciples to get away first because, probably, His disciples were just too happy to see such a crowd. They would have been very glad if Christ became king. So our Lord sent His disciples away first and then He dismissed the crowd. And He went to the mountain to pray.

The next day the crowd found Him on the other side and said, "Master, how did you get here?" And the Lord said, "You come for food. Do not seek the things that perish, but seek the things that are eternal." And the Lord began to say something to them: "I am the bread of life. He that eats my flesh and

drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day.” When the people heard that, they said it was very hard to understand. In other words, when people began to come to Him, the Lord began to say something hard in order to drive them away. Isn’t that strange? And even many of His disciples said, “This is too hard.” And they too left our Lord Jesus.

### **The Lord Desires Disciples**

Even though our Lord Jesus did come to the world to seek and save the lost, His purpose is not just to save us. His purpose is that all who believe in Him will follow Him, that all who believe in Him will be His disciples. In other words, He is not after crowds; He is after those selected ones. He does not seek for quantity; He seeks for quality. That is what our Lord is really after. He wants those who believe in Him to also follow Him. He wants those who believe in Him to also be His disciples. Just to believe in Him is not enough; to be His disciple is what He really desires.

As a matter of principle, those who believe in Him ought to be His disciples. There should be no distinction between believers and disciples. Believers are disciples. How can you believe in Him and not be discipled to Him? This is the Word of God. And yet

strangely, there are many believers who believe in the Lord Jesus but do not follow the Lord. They are not disciples of the Lord. This is very unfortunate, but it has happened. It happened not only when our Lord Jesus was on earth, it has happened throughout the centuries, and it is happening even today. There are many who believe in the Lord Jesus, who accept Him as their Savior in order that they may be saved, but who are still self-centered. They do not follow the Lord all the way. They are not discipled to Christ, and because of this, God’s purpose in saving them cannot be fulfilled. Now, when you believe in the Lord Jesus, do you just accept Him as your Savior? Or, when you believe in Him, do you surrender your whole life to Him and accept Him as your Lord?

Look at the life of the apostle Paul. On the road to Damascus, when the risen Lord met him, the first question he asked was “Who are You, Lord” because he did not recognize Him. He did not know that Jesus of Nazareth is the risen Lord. He did not know that the One whom he persecuted was actually his Master. So the first question he asked was: “Lord, who are You?”

The second question he asked was: “Lord, what do You want me to do?” So you find in the life of the apostle

Paul, the moment he believed in Jesus Christ was also the time he surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. Not only was he a believer, he was a disciple all at once. That is Paul’s experience, and that should be the typical experience of a Christian. We should not separate the timing of a believer and of a disciple. The moment you believe in the Lord Jesus, the moment you are saved, His grace is so much in your life that you should desire to be discipled to Him.

### **The Condition of Discipleship**

Now that we have laid down this principle, we will look at a special case. One day, great crowds surrounded the Lord, and our Lord turned to them and said, “If any man wants to follow Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”

In the Chinese version we try to soften it a little bit because in the original the Lord said, “If you do not hate....” The Chinese version tries to avoid the word *hate* because *hate* has a very bad connotation in our mind. So the Chinese tries to soften it by saying, “love more than.” But actually the Lord said, “If you do not hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, and even

your own life, you cannot be My disciple.”

Who can accept such a word? If the Lord should say to you today—and this is exactly what He is going to say to you today: “If you do not hate your father and mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yea, even your own life, you cannot be My disciple,” will you turn away from that? You say, “Well, that is too hard. That is unreasonable. Doesn’t the Bible say we should honor our father and mother? Doesn’t the Bible say husband love your wife? Doesn’t the Bible say raise up your children in the admonition and discipline of the Lord? Is it not of God that we should love our brothers and sisters? And we are not to hurt our own life? Everybody loves his own life.”

Why is it that the Lord lays down such a condition? At the very outset He lays down a condition for discipleship, and that condition is absolute. Today, when we hear the word *hate*, we do not like it because it has a bad connotation. But actually, hate is neutral. It is just one of the expressions of our emotions, just like love is an expression of our emotions.

Hate is neutral. It depends on who you hate, how you hate, and what you hate. It is just like love. It depends on whom you love, how you

love, and what you love. If you love the wrong person, if you love the wrong way, if you love the wrong thing, then that is a real problem. The same thing is true with hate. It depends on what you hate. As a matter of fact, if you do not know how to hate, you really do not know how to love. Our God is love, but He hates sin. And because He knows how to hate, therefore He knows how to love. Now, if we do not know how to hate, we will never know how to love. We should hate what needs to be hated and love what needs to be loved. So do not close your mind immediately when you hear the word *hate*. It depends on what you hate and how you hate and for what reason you hate.

The Lord said, “If anyone does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, yea, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” This is the condition for discipleship. It is absolute. There is no relationship closer to us than our father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, and even our own life. Yet the Lord demands that we must hate even that kind of relationship in order that we might have the right relationship with Him. In the whole world, who has the right to make such a demand? No one has the right to make such a demand. If there is someone who makes such a

demand, he is either a lunatic, or as He says, He is the Son of God. Isn’t that true? Does anyone ever make such a demand upon you? No one has the right to make such a demand except the Son of God. He is the only one who has the right to make such a demand because He loves us to the extent of giving up everything for us. So this is another proof that our Lord Jesus is the Son of God.

In order to understand this, you need to put a parallel passage with it, Matthew 10:34-39. Here we find the Lord saying something very strange. We know that He is the Prince of Peace. He comes to make peace, that we may have peace with God, and that we may have peace with one another. He is our peace. But here He said something very strange: “Do not think that I have come to send peace upon the earth. I have not come to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter with her mother, and the daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law.”

When Christ comes into your life, a crisis is created. The coming of Christ into a life is not something light. When Christ comes into a life, it creates a crisis. It puts you in a place where you have to make a choice. Whom are you going to choose to follow? Do you choose to maintain your old

relationships? walk in the old way? maintain everything as usual? Or are you going to let go of all these things and follow the Lord in a new way? This is what our Lord is saying to us, and He gave us the reason why. He said, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me. He who loves son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me." Now He does not mean to say you should not love your father and mother. He said you have to love Me *above* loving your father or mother. Why? It is a matter of worthiness. Our father and mother are worthy of our love. They love us and they are worthy of our love, but the Lord said, "Am I more worthy than your father and mother?" It is a matter of worthiness.

### **Seeing the Worthiness of Christ**

Do we really see the worthiness of our Lord Jesus? He is the Son of God in the bosom of the Father, the only begotten Son, and yet He left the Father's bosom. He came into this world to become a man, to live among sinful man, to demonstrate the love of God the Father. Finally, He took our sins on Himself and He died for us. He shed His own blood for us, for the remission of our sins. He is like a seed that has fallen into the ground and died that many seeds may come forth,

that many may receive His own life. Is He more worthy than anybody else in this whole world to you?

So He said, "If you do not love Me above your father and mother, above loving your children, you are not worthy of Me. You do not see My worth. You think that other people are more worthy than I am. Therefore, they deserve more love than Me." In a sense, that explains the word *hate*. When your father or mother or wife or husband or children or brother or sister or even yourself is in contradiction with the Lord Jesus, when there is a controversy, when they are at odds with each other, whom do you hate and whom do you love? When the Lord wants you to go this way and the closest of your own wants you to go the other way, and even your self wants to go the other way, whom do you hate and whom do you love? Do you hate yourself and love the Lord? Or do you love yourself and hate the Lord? It is a matter of comparison. What the Lord demands actually is for our good because He is trying to purify our love, to purify our hate, that we may really hate what God hates and love what God loves. That will purify our emotions. So it is really for our good in order that we may be like our Lord Jesus.

To be a disciple means to learn of Him, that we may take upon ourselves His

character, that we may love what needs to be loved, that we may love with the love of God and not with selfish love, that we may hate what God hates and hate the right thing. What the Lord requires of us is that we may be like Him. This is what discipleship is all about, that we may be like Christ, but the condition is absolute. If there is not that absolute surrender, if there is not that absolute consecration, if there is not that absolute abandonment, you are not worthy of the Lord and you cannot be His disciple. Now think about it. We want to be His disciples. If you really love the Lord, you want to be His disciple, but oftentimes we make discipleship cheap. We think we can be His disciples and yet we can still go our own way, we can still do our own things, we can still keep back a lot for ourselves. We do not understand that the Lord said, "You cannot be My disciples unless there is an absolute surrender."

The Lord continued on to say, "He who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple." In other words, there is a cross here. What is the cross? The cross is when you and those who are closest to you begin to have different thoughts other than the Lord's mind. The Lord wants you to go this way, but your self, your flesh wants to go the other

way. That is the cross. When your father and mother, whom you really love, want you to go a way other than the way the Lord wants you to go, that constitutes a cross. So in our life there are many crosses to bear. To follow the Lord is to walk in the way of the cross. Now if you do not carry your cross you are not able to be His disciple because our Lord Himself carried His cross. All His life He walked in the way of the cross until He was crucified on the cross. So He called us to carry our cross. Every one of us has a different cross, but we need to carry our cross to follow the Lord. Then we can be His disciples. So again you find the condition is absolute.

Do we really take it in? What I desire to share with you is simply this: you may have believed in the Lord for many years and think you are following the Lord, but are you really His disciple? Have you fulfilled the condition that He laid down at the very outset?

### **Building a Tower**

Then the Lord used two illustrations. In Luke 14:28 He says, "For which of you, desirous of building a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, if he have what is needed to complete it." To be a disciple of the Lord is like building a tower. What is a tower? A tower is

something that stands out. It is something that you can see from afar. Therefore, a tower actually signifies a testimony. So to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus is to be entrusted with the testimony of Jesus.

Now if you want to build a tower, the Lord says not to rush into it. It is not just an emotional stirring under a certain atmosphere when everything is so exciting and you raise your hand to be a disciple of Christ. You do not know what you are doing. The Lord says not to do that because something very serious is involved there. The Lord is going to commit His testimony to you. It is a tower you are going to build. You should sit down, calm down. Count the cost whether you are able to finish it, because if you lay the foundation and you are not able to finish it, everybody will look at it and laugh at you: "Ah, he begins but he cannot finish it." In other words, there will be no testimony. Not only are you not able to bear the testimony of Jesus, but you bring reproach to the Lord. So the Lord says not to rush into it. Do not make a decision right away; go home, calm down, and count the cost. See if you are willing to give everything because the cost is everything. Are you willing to use everything in order to build that tower? Or do you want to keep back something and still build the tower? Then you may lay the

foundation but you cannot finish it. Have you ever done that? In your Christian life, after you believe in the Lord Jesus, have you really sat down and counted the cost? To believe in the Lord Jesus is without a cost because the Lord has paid the cost, but there is a cost involved in being His disciple.

Have you ever sat down and counted the cost? When you begin to sit down and count the cost, most likely you will find it is too costly. The enemy of God will create all kinds of imaginative costs to you. The more you count the cost, the more costly it will become. The enemy will try every way to prevent you from being the disciple of Christ, but when the Spirit of God really opens your understanding, and when He really reveals the worth of Christ to you, then you will find that nothing is too costly. Can you say anything is too costly for the Lord? As a matter of fact, what you think is cost actually is your gain because what you considered as worthy to you actually prevents you from gaining Christ.

In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul testified that he used to value his pedigree so highly. He was a bona fide Jew, he was of the tribe of Benjamin, he was a Pharisee, and he was zealous for the law. He counted these as very precious to him, but when the Lord met him, when he saw

the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, he found that what he considered as cost to him actually were the things that held him back. He said that they were loss, and not only loss but dross. When we try to count the cost, we think that it is so costly, but it is because we do not see the worthiness of the Lord. If you have a vision of the Lord, nothing is too costly. As a matter of fact, He is delivering us from the loss, that we may make real gain, that we may really fulfill the purpose of God for our life.

To be a disciple is to build a tower, to maintain the testimony of Jesus, that Jesus is worthy above all, that He is far above all. This is the testimony that we build. He is far more worthy than myself, than my father and mother, than my wife and husband, than my children, than my brothers and sisters. He is far above all. That is the testimony of Jesus.

### Going to War

Then our Lord used another parable. He said, "If a king is going to war . . . " To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus is also going to war. There is a spiritual battle going on, a battle between God and Satan. Who is worthy to be worshiped? Who is worthy to be served? And being a disciple is to decide that question. We are

joining in the battle. In order to do the fight you have to calculate. The enemy comes with twenty thousand and you only want to use ten thousand to fight against the enemy. Now it does not mean you only *have* ten thousand soldiers. It means you only want to *use* ten thousand. You want to keep the others back. You do not want to send all your soldiers out. If that is the case, then don't fight at all. Ask for peace because you will be defeated. Are we willing to give our all? So the Lord said, "If you do not forsake all that is your own, you cannot be My disciple."

If you consider this as mine—I want to keep it for myself, I do not want to use it all up for the Lord—then you cannot fight at all. You are already defeated. You have to forsake all for the Lord's sake, all that you consider as your own. We always say, "I, me, mine." Think about it. What is really yours? You think it is yours, but nothing is really yours. It is all given by Him, all given by God. What is yours? You come out naked; you leave naked. Even your life is given by the Lord. It is not yours, especially your salvation. If you have eternal life; it is the gift of God. Nothing is really yours. You just consider it as yours, but actually it is not yours. You are just a steward. If you see that everything belongs to the Lord, then it is easy to

forsake all because it is not yours at all. Do you see the reason behind it? Unless you forsake all, you cannot be His disciples.

When you read the gospel record, you find our Lord Jesus walking by the Sea of Tiberius, and He saw Peter and Andrew casting the net. The Lord said, "Come, follow Me." They left the net and followed the Lord. He walked a little distance and saw the two sons of Zebedee mending the net, and the Lord said, "Come, follow Me." They left the net, the father, the boat, and followed the Lord. Matthew was at the custom house. The Lord said, "Follow Me." He left and followed the Lord. Everyone that followed the Lord left everything because that is the only way you can be His disciple. But does Peter still have His boat? Yes, he does. Does he have a house? He has his house. Does he have a family? He has a family. Even the mother-in-law stayed in his house. But he has forsaken all. In other words, your heart is detached from everything. You consider the Lord as everything to you. If He wants, He can have it because it is His. Unless we forsake all that we consider as our own, we cannot be His disciples. Discipleship is absolute. Either you are a disciple or you are not. Either you are following the Lord or you are not following the

Lord. Where are you now?  
Are we building the tower?  
Are we in the fight?

### **Diluted Salt**

The Lord concludes His word saying, "Salt is good." In the Bible salt is very important. In Leviticus 2:13, every oblation, every meal offering must be seasoned with salt because it is the salt of the covenant of God. It means that it is everlasting. Salt prevents corruption. So the Lord said, "You are the salt of the world" (see Matthew 5:13). To whom did He say, "You are the salt of the world"? It was to the disciples, not just believers. We are the salt of the world. If we follow the Lord, there is a special taste in our life. The Lord said, "You are a peculiar people." We are extraordinary. We are different from the world because we have a new life in us. We have Christ in us; it is salty. Whenever you put a little salt in anything, you know it. Things may be very tasteless, but when you put salt in it, it brings out all the taste. We Christians have a special flavor. The world knows it, but the salt may become seasonless. How can the salt be seasonless? Well, if you dilute it and dilute it and dilute it, and it becomes diluted to a certain point, you do not have the salty taste anymore. What does it mean? It means if we are following

the way of the world, if we are following our flesh, we are being diluted and diluted and diluted until we become seasonless.

When that happens, what do you do with that salt? You cannot put it in the field as a fertilizer, and you cannot throw it into the dump because it was supposed to be salt. What can you do with it? Cast it out. Do you know what it means? The land represents the kingdom. If you are salty, you will enter into the kingdom of God, but if you have lost your special taste, He will not throw you into the dump because the dump is for the unbelievers. Therefore, because you are a believer, what does He do? You will be cast outside the kingdom in outer darkness. That is what it is.

So our Lord finished His word with this. He has a calling. He that has ears, let him hear what the Lord has spoken. Brothers and sisters, may we have an ear to hear. May we from now on have a new beginning that we become a people fully committed to the Lord, that we will follow Him all the way. Wherever the Lamb goes, we go. We will not count the cost because we have already counted and find that He is worthy.

Shall we pray:

*Lord, reveal Thy worthiness to us, otherwise*

*we will never be able to follow Thee. We will turn away just like that rich young ruler. We do not know that Thy grace is sufficient for us. Oh Lord, give us a vision of Thy worthiness that we may really be Your disciples, that we may be useful in Thy hands, that we may build a tower of testimony, that we may join in the battle that Thou hast already won. Have mercy upon us. Do not let us go. Hold us to Thy purpose. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*