

## THE COST OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

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**Luke 14:25-35**

### **Leaving All to Follow Christ**

Now great multitudes went with Him [Jesus]. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

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This teaching of Jesus' can also be found in the book of Matthew, towards the end of chapter 10. What's interesting is when you look at a teaching of Jesus in one of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and then compare it with what is the same message as recorded in another of the gospels. What you can find in the comparison of the dual or multiple accounts is a broader picture of what Jesus was getting at. What we will examine in this account of Jesus' teaching in **Luke 14:25-35** is that we should always look to gain an understanding of what the Word is saying and to what it is intended to mean within the context of the surrounding text and in comparing it with what is the overall message of God's grace in His redemptive plan for His chosen people. At the core of what this all means, the purpose of the Holy Bible, what Christianity is all about, and what is our intended response and role is in starting with a solid foundation before we can get anywhere. There has always been and still is much distortion to God's Truth, in the world and even in the Church. Without a solid and proper foundation we are in effect just grasping for the wind or as King Solomon put it, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind." (**Ecclesiastes 1:14**)

That foundation has to be based first on an understanding of God the Father, Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, who IS the "Word of God", and then the Holy Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit of God who is also

referred to as the Spirit of Christ. We have to know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Throughout history and even in the history of the church there has been major distortions of truth that have led people away from the God who is made up of three persons, God the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. That has led to many false religions, the worship of false gods and angels throughout history and even the worship and praying to persons that God never intended for us to worship or pray to, such as Mary, the mother of Jesus, or to the saints who had gone on to be with Jesus in heaven. Jesus said, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (John 5:22-24)

I've heard it said that Jesus never intended for us to worship Him since Jesus always pointed to the Father. Yet Jesus said, "I AM the Bread of Life", "I AM the Light of the World", "I AM the Door of the sheep", "I AM the Good Shepherd", "I Am the Resurrection and the Life", "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life", and "I AM the True Vine", and now He is seated at "the right hand of God, [of which] angels and authorities and powers have been made subject to Him." (1 Peter 3:22) We can, should and do (I hope) honor God the Father AND Jesus Christ and then also we are intended to rely upon the Holy Spirit of God, that is, the Spirit of Christ, to teach us what His Word means, just as Jesus said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:26) When a woman shouted out to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" (Luke 11:27) What was Jesus' response? "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28) When Jesus was told that His brothers and mother were outside waiting for Him, what was His response? "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?...whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:48-50)

So we have have God in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we are to keep the Words of Jesus which is the will of God. The Apostle John starts out the gospel of John by saying "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:1-5) Shortly after writing that he says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) The

Word John speaks of is of course Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of God.

Before we can begin following the Word of God, that is, adhering to the teachings of Jesus or the principles laid out in the Bible, before we can gain understanding of Jesus and what He is saying in His teachings, we have to fully grasp more than the wind, which means we can't just rely upon our own efforts and capabilities in what we think the Word is saying and then what it means to us.

In the beginning was God. But as John said, the Word, being Jesus, was with God. Just as the beginning of the Bible states in the book of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But John stated that all things were created through Christ, the Word. What does that lead us to? Exactly what John stated in his first epistle in **1 John 5:7**, "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one."

You ever wonder where are the false religions came from and the idol worshipping and all of the ideas came from that contradict the Word of God? When you look into the earliest of civilizations and the gods that they worshipped or at least made mention of, what you'll find over and over again is that most of them started with a three-fold God structure with there being the god and then a son and then a mother. That goes for the ancient Mesopotamian region with ancient Babylon, and the earliest of the Assyrian kingdoms, as well as the eastern religions such as the Hindus and the early Chinese who had the mother and child as well. In time there sprang up the multitudes of other false gods such as you find in Greek mythology also what those early ancient civilizations established was a worship of the queen of heaven who has taken on many different names, some of which are mentioned in the Bible such as Ashtoreh and Diana and eventually morphed into the worship of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Nevertheless, there is no queen of heaven. [**The Two Babylons**] How did ancient civilizations recognize a god, a mother, and a child? The apostle Paul sheds light on that. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." (**Romans 1:20-23**) Much more can be said on that based on what we know of the giants on the earth and the possible involvement of the fallen angels back in the ancient times, nevertheless, Paul summed it up in what I just read in **Romans 1:20-23**. The demons definitely knew who Jesus was and addressed Him as the

Son of God. The beginning of the rebellion against God was first enacted in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. They chose to believe in a lie that they would be like gods if they ate the fruit off of the tree of knowledge and good and evil. Cain rebelled against God in killing his brother Abel, even after God had spoken to him about his anger issue. The rebellion of God became so extreme to where "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (**Genesis 6:5**) What did God do then? He flooded the entire earth and saved only the family of Noah, eight people total. Not long after the flood we read in **Genesis 11** of the building of the tower of Babel. The people said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." (**Genesis 11:4**) That was after God had said after the flood to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Instead they rebelled against God's command and wanted to make a name for themselves, just like the Frank Sinatra song, "I did it my way."

We have God Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and OUR Creator as well. God as we call Him, IS God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Then there's us, His creation. "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." (**Psalms 24:1**) We are God's creation. The 24 elders in heaven are recorded by the Apostle John in **Revelation 4:11** as saying, "'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and **by Your will they exist and were created.**" It was and is God's intentional plan for us to be here, for HIS purpose. Yet as we see from example after example in God's Word that the heart of man tends to gravitate towards evil. Listen to what God tells the prophet Jeremiah, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord...Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." (**Jeremiah 17:5-10**) There's two points I want to make in what God told Jeremiah. 1. The heart of man is wicked and deceitful 2. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord."

While some may object to saying their heart is wicked or deceitful, compared to God who is perfect our hearts are wicked and deceitful. Jesus said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (**Matthew 5:48**) As I mentioned before of Jesus saying He is the Good Shepherd, having Jesus lead us as our Shepherd

isn't going to get us to being perfect. God led the Israelites out of captivity to the Egyptians and how did that turn out. They grumbled and complained and angered God so much that God told Moses that He was to wipe them out and start a new nation with Moses alone. While God was ultimately testing Moses' heart to see how he'd respond, Moses pleaded with God not to destroy His people. Nevertheless, God did not allow that generation to enter the Promised Land due to their disobedience but had them wander around the wilderness for forty years until the next generation was grown and the first generation died off. God Himself was leading His people and they still rebelled against Him. So it would be with us as well. The first phase in God's plan was to send His Son Jesus to die on a cross for our sins. Jesus tells us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17) Knowing that and believing that alone though isn't the fullness of God's plan for us to "be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Once again, the heart of man is said to be wicked and deceitful which is hardly perfect by God's standards.

Jesus said that we must be born-again, that is born of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5) which means He dwells in us. That is where we are "in Christ." Then God begins working in us His Wisdom, and Righteousness, He Sanctifies us, setting us apart from the world in His holiness, and Then His Redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30) It is all according to God's plan for us according to His perfect will. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10) His Holy Spirit works in us the fruit of the Spirit with "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

So we have to come to the understanding that God, is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that it is His plan and purpose for us to be His, to be in Christ, to let the Holy Spirit work in us His perfection, and that we nor anyone else can do that for ourselves. Likewise it is the same for your earthly father and mother, brothers and sisters. The same goes for each and every person on this earth. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12) When Adam and Eve sinned against God it truly did lead to their death, despite Satan's lies. They eventually physically died but they also faced a spiritual death. Yet even before Jesus was born God's people knew that their salvation had to come from God and not in their own efforts, that is those who knew the truth. King David said as much in Psalm 62:7-8, "In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in

God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." Paul explained that God, "having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him." (**Ephesians 1:9-10**) But, as is evident, we all don't come around to repentance at the same time. That is, really, we all come to believing on Christ and receiving Him into our hearts and following Him at different times from those around us. When Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple", we have to look at it in context. Does that mean when we see them we have to scowl and sneer at them and treat them with contempt? In **Matthew 5:44-46** Jesus said, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?"

As I mentioned at the outset of this message that this teaching was also recorded by Matthew. He recorded Jesus as saying, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." That's a tad different than saying to hate your parents and siblings. The point being I think, is that Jesus should always be number one in our lives. I've heard it argued back and forth about who is number two, others or yourself. I heard a message at Christmas time to where the preacher used the acronym J-O-Y to give the order of what should be our priorities. Jesus, then others, then yourself. I contend that it is a moot point in that Jesus is number one, period. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (**Matthew 6:33**) Really that is saying as we are seeking God's will for our lives, as He is building His kingdom and is working in us His perfection, He will provide for us what we need and He will guide us according to His perfect will. An example that Susie and I can attest to is that when God called us into this ministry we had to leave behind our beloved brothers and sisters at our previous church. We can only hope that our loved ones understand that. The Apostle Paul clears that up by saying, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (**Galatians 2:20**) When we believe on Christ and receive Him we are consenting to God to be His. Paul also said, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (**1 Corinthians 6:20**) We are not merely guided by the Holy



Spirit, He is working in us the will and purpose of God in building His eternal kingdom and making us to be perfect as He is perfect, to the extent that Paul says in **Philippians 2:13**, "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

What is important in knowing all that is that Jesus said that we must count the cost. As they persecuted Him, they'll persecute us. As they hated Him, they will hate us. As they mocked and ridiculed Him, so with us. If anyone tries to convince you by taking Scripture out of context to say that God just wants to bless you and give you a life of bliss and contentment, you can be sure that they aren't listening to the Spirit of God. Jesus guarantees that we will suffer persecution, there is a cost-that is we are surrendering our will for God's will. It is only in God's will, in Christ Jesus that we are promised to be joint-heirs with Jesus, that we will reign with Him, and that we will as Jesus said, "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (**Matthew 13:43**)

The world will tell you to be your own person and to find yourself and who you are in making a name for yourself, making your mark on history by creating your own legacy. Jesus tells us that, "whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." In the Matthew account of this teaching, Jesus is recorded as saying, "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." To be a Christian, a follower of Christ is to surrender our will for God's will. Jesus said that before He was crucified on a cross. His disciples continued to not want to accept what Jesus was telling them that He was to suffer and die for the purpose and will of God the Father. So when Jesus said that they too must take up their cross and follow Him I'm guessing that they didn't quite get that. In **Barne's Notes on the New Testament, pg. 51**, he explains, "When persons were condemned to be crucified, a part of the sentence was, that they should carry the cross on which they were to die to the place of execution. Thus, Christ carried His, til He fainted from fatigue and exhaustion. The cross was usually composed of two rough beams of wood, united in the form of [a cross]. It was an instrument of death. To carry it was burdensome, was disgraceful, was trying to the feelings, was an addition to the punishment. So, to carry the cross is a figurative expression, denoting that we must endure whatever is burdensome, or trying, or considered as disgraceful, in following Christ. It consists simply in doing our duty, let the world think of it or speak of it as they may. It does not consist in making trouble for ourselves, or doing things merely to be opposed; it is doing just what is required of us in the Scriptures, let it produce whatever shame, disgrace, or pain it may. This every follower of Jesus is required to do." I would just add to

that, "as the Holy Spirit works in us and guides us according to the Scriptures."

Yet as it is with many Christians today, they are constantly looking back, as the Israelites did to their previous comforts in Egypt (even though they were living as slaves). So it was also with Lot's wife, who was told to keep going and not look back when God was destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. She turned back briefly toward Sodom and turned into a pillar of salt. When Jesus said, "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!", He was not referring to Lot's wife of course. Our salt, that Jesus speaks of, is in Christ Jesus. He is our source of the fruit of the Spirit, He is our Wisdom and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption, and He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." (John 14:6) The world has come up with all sorts of ways to circumvent being accountable to the one true God, who is perfect in all of His ways. All of the other "religions" that come and go from one civilization to the next will never get you to what is God's plan of redemption for His people. Paul quoted Isaiah in saying, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) He was referring to the fulfilling of that in God's amazing grace in Christ Jesus but it is certain that we can still see that what God has planned for His people is far greater than we can possibly imagine.

The question for us is, are we willing to surrender our will and comforts for God's will and purpose in His presently building His kingdom and is preparing us to be perfect as He is perfect that we may be one in Christ for all of eternity? God will not force Himself on us but He does make it abundantly clear that those written in the book of life will inherit His incredible promises and those not written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15) What was good enough for Jesus, the Son of God, is good enough for me. Have you counted the cost? Are you willing to go the distance in Christ for God's eternal reward?

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have sinned against You.  
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.  
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,  
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,  
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,  
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,  
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.  
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,  
and live in the newness of life,  
being led by Your Holy Spirit,  
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!