

WHAT PRICE DISCIPLESHIP?

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(Mat 16:21 KJV) From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

(Mat 16:22 KJV) Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

(Mat 16:23 KJV) But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

(Mat 16:24 KJV) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

(Mat 16:25 KJV) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

(Mat 16:26 KJV) For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

(Mat 16:27 KJV) For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Whenever I read these words, the words of our text this morning, I pause in reflection and in awe. What Jesus said here will always be the Divine Requirements of Discipleship. After all, we have the Lord Himself spelling out in no uncertain terms what it means to be one of His disciples. What we don't have is a church creed telling us, or a preacher spewing these things out to us, or some hierarchy dictating to us what we should do. No! Instead it is the Lord Himself! He is telling us what it takes to be His disciple! Now since it is the Lord, I would assume that we listen more seriously. If I were to tell you what it takes to be His disciple, you would perhaps halfway listen, and say to yourself, "Well, some of what he says is subject to interpretation—so I really don't believe it that way." But you cannot argue with Jesus! He is Truth!

I. THE PRICE HE PAID.

The first thing Jesus tells His disciples, here on the northern border of Galilee is this—I Must! What are these I Musts that He had to pay to lead us to Eternal Life?

A. The first "I Must" is "I Must go to Jerusalem." How Jesus must have dreaded this last trip to the Holy City. It meant nothing less than facing the seething hatred and damnable criticism by Jesus' harshest critics, the religious authorities whose headquarters were in Jerusalem. The place that should welcome Him, King, Lord, Messiah, and should repent at His coming, the people who should bow down before Him, wash His Precious feet, and confess His Name as above every name, the religious authorities, would turn upon Him, and convict Him as just another pretender. He dreaded that! He loved Jerusalem!

B. The next “I must” “I must suffer many things of the Elders, Chief Priests and Scribes.” In a word, He was not only “rejected of men” as Isaiah would prophesy, He was rejected by the very leaders of His own culture and His own religion. They would mock Him and heap scorn upon Him, those most powerful of the Jews, those ‘keepers of the religious traditions.’

C. The next “I Must” is this—“I must be killed”—This was the ultimate price of obedience to the Father, to be made sin for us and to be crucified, murdered, executed, on our behalf. The Price is too high, much too high, but He was gladly willing to pay the price so that, in dying for our sins, He might bring us back to God.

D. The last “I must” he uttered was this—“I must be raised again the 3rd day.” He could not stay in the tomb. He must not stay with the Heavenly Father in mansions of splendor. No! He had to rise from the dead in order to justify His sacrifice, and in order to lead us as the firstfruits of our own resurrection.

“Jesus paid it all
All to Him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow.”

II. THE REBUKE TO A COSTLESS CHRISTIANITY.

Peter Rebukes Jesus, “Be it far from thee Lord, this shall not be unto Thee.”

A. In effect, Peter is saying exactly what Satan suggested when he said, “Fall down and worship me and all this shall be thine.” Peter was implying that there could be an instant salvation without any price, without any cost whatever. Certainly Christ wanted the world to worship Him. He wanted to be recognized immediately as Messiah. But He would not have such nonsense as Peter’s. Satan was simply speaking through the lips of Peter, trying to deter Jesus from the Price He had to pay. Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!” as if to say, “I’ve heard that offer before, and I adamantly refuse to hear it again!”

B. Jesus rebuked Peter and then said, “You are an offense to me.” Christ was offended that Peter did not take His Words seriously. Christ was also offended that Peter, like Satan, was considering the option of a crossless Christianity that was also costless. The very heart of Jesus was broken. He was deeply offended by Peter’s statement.

Christ also rebukes our costless Christianity, does He not? In your heart of hearts you know He does. The very word blood is akin to the English word bless; and If we don’t bleed we cannot bless. To follow Jesus means sacrifice, as our Lord quickly says.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German Christian, who stood against Hitler and Nazism, and was imprisoned and hanged for his obedience to Christ, spoke about Cheap grace. “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion, without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

Real grace, on the other hand, is dear and costly. A man must give up his life to follow Christ. Grace is dear because it cost the Son of God his life, but it is grace because God did not count this too great a cost.

Cheap grace arose as the church became secularized as the world became Christianized. Costly grace did not die, as is evidenced in the rise of the monastic movement wherein the spiritual elite yet retained something of the demands of discipleship. But even the cloister was a corruption of grace. The life of a disciple is to be lived in the world against the world's hostility not in the favored atmosphere of a friendly monastery. Against the triumph of cheap grace in the church, Bonhoeffer calls for a return to obedience of Christ. Only in costly grace is there joy in Christian living.

How does one become a disciple? First, there is the call of Jesus to follow *him*. A doctrinal system, a church structure and other substitutes for the Living Christ render discipleship irrelevant. Second, in answering the call of Christ one must take the first concrete step. This step takes one out of his previous existence and places him where faith is possible. "Faith can no longer mean sitting still and waiting — they must arise and follow him."

At this juncture Bonhoeffer introduces two propositions that must be held together always. Both are equally true: "*Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.*" There is no obedience without faith nor faith without obedience. In believing there is an act of obedience, such as Peter's leaving his nets or Matthew's walking away from his receipts. This act of obedience is never more than a "dead work of the law" but it must be done because Jesus commands it. Inability to believe is probably due to unwillingness to take the first step.

Being a disciple is related to bearing the cross of Christ. Suffering and rejection go hand in hand with bearing the cross. Suffering alone could produce a martyr, but rejection prohibits it. To take up the cross is to deny oneself. "To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us." Every Christian must bear the cross. The cross means (1) that one must "abandon the attachments of this world," (2) that one must come after Christ and die to himself, and (3) perhaps undergo death completely. Suffering is one of the badges of discipleship. Yet in suffering there is triumph. When suffering is concluded there is nothing else it can do. It is a path to victory."

III. THEN JESUS SPECIFIES THE PRICE WE MUST PAY TO BE HIS DISCIPLES.

A. First, He says, we must DENY OURSELVES. That doesn't mean 'self-denial' the way we often use it. We often think that if we deny ourselves some food or drink, or if we do something that would be a kind of 'penance', that we would be denying ourselves. We see self-denial as a keeping of 'lent' season, where certain things are given

up. In fact, we speak of fasting as self-denial. This may be self-denial, but this is not Jesus' definition of self-denial.

Self-denial means saying no to self and yes to God, and doing so at every juncture of life. Self-denial means dying to self. You see, Jesus Himself defines it later when He says, "Whosoever will save His life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose His life for My sake will find it." Mt.16:25.

B. Next, Jesus said, "...and take up His cross..." What does it mean to take up our cross? To take up one's cross means to willingly suffer for the faith. (Acts 5:40 KJV) And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (Acts 5:41 KJV) And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

We must not only willingly suffer for our faith, we must do so with joy. The Bible says that "for the joy set before Him," Jesus endured the Cross. Surely, He despised the shame of becoming sin for, but we must count the shame we suffer for His sake as our greatest joy. Jesus told His disciples that when they were persecuted for righteousness sake that they should leap for joy.

Further to take up the Cross means that we are doing our suffering with the purpose of saving others. All that we do as Christ's disciples must reflect our concern for the souls of others. If they persecute us, or even kill us, Jesus is reminding us that we must seek to get them saved, to get them to be right with God.

Finally, taking up the cross daily means that we live a daily life of sacrificial giving, loving, and living, for Jesus' sake.

C. Then, Jesus said, "Follow me!" But what does that mean? To follow Jesus, means, first of all, to do what Jesus commands. Listen to what Jesus Himself said: (John 14:21 KJV) He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

We are to love Jesus by doing what He commands. In that way we will follow Him truly. But we are to follow Jesus by letting Him be Lord. I mean by that that we must let Jesus write the agenda. We are not our own; we were bought with a price. Therefore, since we belong to Jesus, we must live our lives Jesus' way. That is, we follow Him by getting our very life's guidance from Him.

D. Lastly, we follow Jesus by never ceasing to follow Him. When He says, "Follow Me," He is saying 'follow me and keep on following me.' No matter what life deals us, we are to keep on keeping on. We are not to be like the man Jack Weller wrote about in his book, "Yesterday's People," who said, "I used to be a Christian. But then I lost my job. And I figure that if God is not going to help me, I'm not going to help Him." In sunshine and in rain, we are to follow Him; in good times and in bad times, we are to keep following our Lord.

IV. LAST OF ALL, JESUS ASSURES US THAT IF WE DO NOT PAY THE PRICE OF DISCIPLESHIP, WE CERTAINLY CANNOT FAKE DISCIPLESHIP AS IF WE HAVE PAID THAT PRICE.

A. He Reminds us that He will come Again With His Holy Angels. How foolish to think that we can fake discipleship with the living Lord Himself as our Judge. God help us to know that there is only one Name that is above every Name. And before that Name, every knee must bow, and every tongue confess Him as Lord.

There is an inscription in the dome of our Capitol in Washington which few people know about. It says: "One far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves." A visitor saw this inscription and asked the guide what it meant. He said: "I think it refers to the second coming of Christ." When the dome of our Capitol was erected, some God-fearing official ordered that inscription to be etched in the dome of our seat of government, believing that its truth was vital to the concern of our nation.
Billy Graham

The angels will be with Him to enforce the Word. That day will be the judgment day, and no one can thwart the judgment and the justice that Jesus will deliver on that day. He is Judge, and He will judge His Creation in Righteousness.

B. He Reminds Us then That We cannot Fake Discipleship. He will come and reward us according to our works. Do you remember what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount: (Mat 7:21 KJV) 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. (Mat 7:22 KJV) 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? (Mat 7:23 KJV) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Those who try to fake discipleship will simply and surely be put away throughout eternity in hell, a place will they have in the fire that burneth forever, which is the second death.

Discipleship! It cost Jesus His life to bring this great gift to us! It costs us then no less than a life given to Jesus, and dedicated fully to His Kingdom's Work. What price discipleship? Everything, absolutely everything! What an exciting challenge!