

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 14- Luke 14:15-24

260- The Radical Cost of Following Jesus- Part 1

October 19, 2014

Luke 14:25-35

25 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,

30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

34 "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?

35 "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

To the Glory of God

Now several Centuries ago- one of the Puritans said,

“Hard preaching produces soft hearts while soft preaching produces hard hearts”

The Words of Jesus in this Passage that Brother Andy just read to you constitutes hard preaching. This is radical preaching- the likes of which the world has never known. And we need to remember that the goal of this hard preaching by Jesus in this Passage on that day was *not* to make the people who heard them hard or mean or cruel or unloving- but the goal was to produce soft hearts in those people who heard Jesus that day. And hopefully, mercifully- if God would be good to us- as I attempt to preach these very same hard words to you today- they will produce a soft heart in us, too- the kind of heart that is broken and contrite, and one that trembles at God’s Word.

About 600 years before Jesus was born- the great Prophet Isaiah said this in **Isaiah 66:2b**

... But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

... so I will tell you that *whatever* God would choose to give us- that would produce in us a heart like that- a heart that can be *easily* convicted of sin, a heart that can be *easily* humbled, a heart that can tremble at God’s Word- I say that is a good thing and not a bad thing. And so if the Puritan was correct- then the *means* that God uses to produce in us a heart that will *guarantee* that God Almighty will “look to us”- is hard preaching.

And so we must take heed to ourselves not to shy away from Words like this. We dare not be a people who cannot endure Sound Doctrine, and we cannot afford to be a people- who stop their ears and run away from the hard sayings of Jesus- for rest assured- having a hard heart toward God, and a heart that is *not* quickly convicted of sin, a heart that is *not* easily humbled, a heart that does *not* tremble at God’s Word is a far more frightening thing- a far more hideous thing, a

far more dangerous thing than anything that God's Love Personified would say to us.

Now in a nutshell- what Jesus is talking about here is

The Radical Cost of Discipleship

... that is- what being a true disciple of Jesus Christ will *require* of us, what it will *cost* us, what it will *demand* from us. And this is not the first time that Dr. Luke has told us that Jesus has talked this way. You may remember back in Chapter 9- Jesus gave us some more hard words when He said this:

Luke 9:23-26

23 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.

And as we studied this back then- we found out that because Jesus used universal words like:

- ✓ All
- ✓ Anyone
- ✓ Whoever

... that this shows us that Jesus was *not* simply speaking to those who stood around Him on that day- but Jesus was speaking to *anyone* and *everyone* who lays claim to being a true disciple of Jesus Christ at any point of time in history, and *anyone* and *everyone* who will lays claim to be following Jesus- which hopefully includes us.

So let us agree that this is radical- it is hard. And it is *not* something that the lost pagan world would ever teach to us in a million years. For example- you would never hear talk like this from your

Biology Professor or your Economics Professor. You would never hear this from your immediate superior at work or your Federal Representative or Senator. The President of the United States doesn't talk like this. The Queen of England doesn't talk like this. Those who teach you how to make money and live good and productive lives here on the earth don't talk like this. Most of our friends and parents don't talk like this, and sadly, very few leaders of the modern Church talk like this either.

But Jesus *did* talk like this and the Apostles *did* talk like this and those who led the Church until just about 150 years ago *did* talk like this. All of our great heroes from Church History talked like this. And so I suggest that we should talk like this, too.

Now I want you to understand that it used to be that worldwide Christianity was radically different than it is today. Worldwide Christianity didn't teach that God owes us material benefits in this life and that our Salvation produces our best life now- here on this sin cursed globe.

The Church of Jesus didn't teach people that they could be healed and have the nicer things of life, and that they were somehow exempted from sufferings and persecution and injustice like you hear so much about today. Those who led the Church back then warned the people of God about the insidious curse of covetousness and the idolatry of material goods and they warned with tears about the horrific and negative effects that money could bring upon their souls.

Those men preached hard sermons about the hard sayings of Jesus that produced hearts that gladly ran away from the praise of men and that delighted so much in Truth that they had the collective testimony that their Treasure was nowhere to be found on this earth.

Hard preaching about the hard sayings of Jesus produced men like Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Zinzendorf was a German, born in 1700, who founded a community of earnest Christians called "Herrnhut" ("The Lord's Watch"). Their community became part of the Moravian Church and was best known for its unparalleled missionary zeal.

On a particular Saturday in 1727, Zinzendorf led a prayer meeting. And about that particular prayer meeting- they said,

"The Lord came down".

And from that single prayer meeting- that community started a round-the-clock "prayer watch" that lasted 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for 100 unbroken years.

Now there were only about 300 persons in that community at the beginning, and various ones covenanted to pray for one of the 24 hours each day for their entire lives. And in 1792- a full 65 years removed from that initial prayer meeting- with the lamp of prayer still burning brightly- that little community of unknown and broken believers- who had been feeding on steady diet of the hard sayings of Jesus for over six decades- sold themselves into slavery so they could reach both the slaves and the slave owners with the Gospel in the West Indies, Greenland, Lapland, Turkey, and North America.

So being acquainted with and loving the radically hard sayings of Jesus produced a people who were utterly consumed with the prospect of making Jesus known.

And if God's Grace will fall upon us today as we examine this Passage- the result of these hard Words by the Prince of Life will cause our hearts to melt, too, and they will do great damage to our own self-righteousness and arrogance, and they will produce in us that kind of soft heart that will so value Jesus Christ, that will put such a high worth on the King of all kings- that all other human expressions of love on this earth will be, in the words of Matthew Henry-

"Every good man loves *his relations*; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must comparatively *hate them* or in other words- *he* must love them *less than Christ...*"¹

Now many of you are somewhat familiar with Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry was a British Puritan Pastor- who wrote his very famous devotional "Commentary on the entire Bible" over an eleven year time span between the years of 1704 and 1714. Now normally- those who use *Matthew Henry's Commentary* also use another tool called *Strong's Concordance* that gives you the location of every single word in the Bible. However Dr. Strong- who was another British

¹ (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

Puritan Pastor didn't have *Matthew Henry's Commentary* to use because it was being written at about the same time that his *Commentary* was being put to paper. And so Matthew Henry did what he did without Strong's Concordance, and Dr. Strong wrote his Concordance without the use of *Matthew Henry's Commentary*. And those of you who actually do study the Bible know how amazing what I just said really is.

And *Matthew Henry's Commentary* is so spiritually insightful that the great evangelist, George Whitefield, read all six volumes- four different times. And the last time- Whitefield was said to have been so moved by what Pastor Henry wrote in his *Commentary*- that he read through it the fourth time- while on his knees.

I consulted *Matthew Henry's Commentary* on the Biblical text that Brother Andy just read to you, and in that *Commentary*- Matthew Henry said this:

“... [Jesus]... takes it for granted that these people had a mind to be *His disciples*, that they might be *qualified* for preferment in His kingdom. And they expected that He should say, ‘If any man come to me, and be my disciple, he shall have wealth and honour in abundance; let me alone to make him a great man.’ But Jesus tells them quite the contrary. Instead they must be willing to *quit* that which was *very dear*, and therefore must come to Him thoroughly *weaned from* all their creature-comforts, and *dead* to themselves, so as cheerfully to part with the things of this earth rather than quit their interest in Christ. A disciple is not *sincere and* he will not be *constant* and persevering, unless he love Christ better than anything in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a *sacrifice*, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it (so the martyrs, who *loved not their lives to death*), or as a *temptation*, when by our parting with it we are put into a better capacity of serving Christ. Thus Abraham parted with his own country, and Moses with Pharaoh's court. Mention is not made here of *houses* and *lands*; philosophy will teach a man to look upon these with contempt; but Christianity carries it even higher. Every good man loves *his relations*; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must comparatively *hate them or he must love them less than Christ...*”²

² (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

So Jesus is basically telling us in this Passage four radical things. He is saying that being a true disciple of Jesus requires that we:

1. Hate all human relationships (**Luke 14:26**)
2. Carry our own cross (**Luke 14:27**)
3. Count the cost (**Luke 14:28-32**)
4. Give up our own possessions (**Luke 14:33**)

And the key to understanding what Jesus meant here lies in just four words:

1. Hate
2. Carry
3. Count
4. Give

And the overriding Statement that Jesus is talking about in this entire Passage is this:

Love Me. Value Me. Follow Me. Serve Me.

And so loving Jesus and valuing Jesus and following Jesus and serving Jesus is the key to understand what Jesus meant when He tells us to hate and to carry and to count and to give.

Now two things become unmistakably clear when we hear Jesus talk like this:

- A. This is very *hard*
- B. This is very *glorious*

We need to be able to say to each other- "*These Sayings by Jesus are very hard!*" In fact- they are impossible for anyone to live up to- in and through their own power. For anybody to think they have risen to the level of being super spiritual where these Demands of Jesus do not shake them down to their very core are simply deceived. To suggest that anyone can fulfill these Divine Requirements listed by Jesus here simply by "making up their minds" or "putting forth more will power" or

"exerting more human effort"- belittles Grace and dishonors Jesus Christ.

So this is not about being tough or macho. This is not about the limits of human endurance. This is not a race to see who can throw more of their own possessions out into the front yard. All of that would be a sign of a hard heart that desires to do something so that it can feel worthy and earn favor with God. No, this Passage is about trembling before God. This is about falling down- begging God to empower and enable you to remain faithful if Jesus would turn to you and require from you about these issues. So this is about Grace. This is about struggling in the Power of the Holy Spirit to God's Glory. So we need to agree with the Puritans and say that these Sayings by Jesus here are indeed very hard.

But they are also very glorious. So if all you see and hear is how hard all this is and how difficult it is, you never look at the fact that to the very same degree that these Sayings of Jesus are hard- they are also very glorious- you will grow weary and faint. And as you faint- you will become bitter and angry at God and your heart will grow hard and you will murmur against God and feel as though He wanted you to fail and you will never discover the glory of a soft heart that Jesus will give to you if you allow these hard sayings to transform your life.

So please allow me to show you four hard sayings here and then we'll look at four glorious things that will come from these hard sayings. And we will not finish today- but we can begin.

1. Being a Disciple Means that Love for Jesus must be superior to love for anybody else

Luke 14:25&26

25 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Now keep in mind that in context- Jesus has just finished damning the Pharisees who were standing around him and now He is talking to those who are following Him.

Back in verse 24- Jesus has just completed a Parable and the gist of that Parable was what He said in verse 24:

For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.

And this shows us the Glory of the New Covenant as we discovered last week as those who were initially invited to come to Heaven with Jesus- the Jews- spurned the Love of God with very flimsy excuses, and so Jesus turned to the Gentile world to get a people for His Glory that were originally *not* a people. And that is the only reason that any of us are saved today.

And so in verse 25- Dr. Luke tells us that Jesus is now finished for a while even talking to the Jewish religious hypocrites and He now turns to the great sea of humanity that has been following Him for about three years now.

Now as we have studied before- these people were called "disciples". And there is some confusion about just what that means- but let me remind you that this English word "**disciple**" comes from the Greek word "mathetes", which is best understood as being a "student". So disciple= mathetes= student. And so these "students" made up four groups:

1. Those who were genuinely saved
2. Those who were being drawn to Jesus to be saved
3. Those who were intellectually curious about Jesus but who were not going to be saved
4. Those who were in the crowd for any number of reasons and who were on their way to walking away from Jesus

Of course, the Apostles came from the first group. And those who left Jesus standing in the middle of the road when He gave them another hard saying over in **John 6:66** were in the fourth group. But all of these people were classified as being "disciples" or mathetes or students. So that is the group that Jesus is saying these hard words to this time.

And so the first hard saying has to do with hating other human relationships.

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Now we need to say right about now that Love is the hallmark of Christianity. We are commanded to love our families and our spiritual brothers and sisters, our spouses, and we are even commanded to love our enemies. And the Apostle John tells us in **1John 4:8&16** that:

God is love

... so what's with the hate here?

And yet we see right here in **Luke 14** that Jesus tells us to hate, and we are told to hate the people who are the closest and dearest to us- our own family.

So when you read or hear things like this- you have to first take a step back and be reminded that Jesus was God Almighty in human flesh. And that about 1400 years before God took on human flesh and Jesus was born of a virgin- Moses wrote this from **Exodus 20:12**:

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

And later on- the Apostle Paul *expounded* on this Divine Command when he said in **Ephesians 6:1-3**:

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise),

3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.

And we need to understand that the word that was translated into English as “**honor**” in **Exodus 20** originally came from the Hebrew word *kabad*, which means: *to be heavy, to be weighty, to be grievous, to be hard, to be rich, to be honorable, to be glorious, to be burdensome, to be honored.*

So this is a word that denotes heaviness and responsibility and seriousness and a burden. And so we are to look at our parents

differently than we do anybody else, and we should see them in a heavy and burdening way. In other words- we are to treat what they say and what they desire as being serious and as something that is our own responsibility to do and not somebody else's. And we are to receive the weight of that responsibility and the burden of what they say and what they do and who they are.

So we are to honor our mothers and fathers and give honor to them. And notice that the Word of God does not make a distinction here between those mothers and fathers who are saved and those who are not- our parents are to be honored- even if they do not deserve it. In other words- our burden to honor and obey our parents is not relieved simply by the fact that our parents are heathens and not born again.

And many who live in the 21st Century do not sense this heaviness and burden today- as so many seem to look at honoring parents as being optional, or something we should do if we have the time or if it is convenient. But we must know that this failure to honor our mother and father is not an indication of how far we have advanced as a culture but is simply another evidence that we have forgotten the Lord and His Word.

Now notice that in **Ephesians 6**- Paul expounded on the Hebrew word "kabad" and used the Greek word "hupakouoo," which was translated into English as "**obey**", and which means: *to listen to and hearken*. And then Paul said to do this was "right" meaning that it is part of manifesting Righteousness. And we should also remember that as sons of the living God- we are commanded repeatedly to love our wives to the same degree that Jesus Christ loves His Church. So now let us put these two Passages together:

Honor your father and your mother by hearkening to them and listening to them for this is a manifestation of Righteousness (godliness)- even if they don't deserve it- so that your days may be prolonged on the earth.

Now contrast that with what Jesus said in **Luke 14:26**:

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Now what are we to make of this? Is God talking one way as Father and another way as God the Son? Is Jesus contradicting His Father? Not at all. First I want you to notice several things:

Jesus is not only telling you to hate our mothers and fathers but also our wives and our sisters and brothers (children?) and ourselves as well.

And because that is true- then we know that Jesus is talking about something infinitely more important than trying to get us all to violate the Fifth Commandment. But notice also that:

Jesus is telling us to hate in connection to loving Him and following Him and being a true disciple of His. So this is not just naked hatred- born out of anger or rebellion- this is a *comparative* hatred; a *comparative* act of our will.

So I want to say the same thing in four different ways that illustrates the great Divine Principle here:

- As we strive to honor and obey our parents and love our families and to love our wives- we must maintain our first allegiance to God and to His Word and to Divine Truth and never compromise Truth on account of family considerations.
- No human on earth is more important than Jesus- not even us
- Valuing Jesus and loving Jesus demands that He has preeminence over everyone else
- Compromising with Truth and engaging in sinful behavior in order to maintain human relationships means that those relationships are more valuable to us than Jesus

So to “hate” in this sense means: the absence of love or to love less. And to love our families *less* than we love Jesus is not only godly- it is proper and is the key to truly loving our families. You see, if our families are more valuable than Jesus- if we love our families more than Jesus, if we value the relationship with people more than we value Jesus- then those people have become an idol to us and idols are those objects (or people) that replace God in our lives.

But sooner or later- whoever we value above God- whoever we have made to be our idol and whoever we are willing to abandon Jesus

to keep- will say or do something that is less than what God would say or do. And when that happens- we become disillusioned with our idol because they have disappointed us and we end up not valuing or loving them at all.

So the key to truly loving and honoring your parents or your wife or your family or even yourself is to always hold God and what God has done and what God has said higher and to be more important than them. I adore my wife and would gladly give my life for her precisely because I do *not* love her more than I love Jesus. I love Jesus far more than I love Rhonda and so because I love Jesus- the Lord has told me what pleases Him in how to treat and care for my wife. So while I love Rhonda as much as any man could ever love his wife- I do what I do out of my love for and respect for Jesus. So loving Jesus more than I love my wife- guarantees that Rhonda will be well loved. And Rhonda and I have made a covenant with each other- that if one of us would fall away from Jesus and turn back to the world- the other is not going with them.

And to hold human relationships in such a way *requires* that you have a complete unwillingness to compromise with Divine Truth to maintain that relationship. And that unwillingness requires that you value Jesus more than you value anyone else. And it requires that if push comes to shove- you will *ignore* your human relationship or you will *disobey* them or you will *reject* what they say or you will even *end the relationship altogether* rather than sin against God and deny Jesus.

Now this is not an excuse to treat people rudely or with disdain. It is also not an excuse to act in such a way that allows you to isolate yourself from people simply because you disagree with them about insignificant matters. So like I said- this is not easy- it is hard. It isn't simple- it is complicated, and it isn't clean- it is very messy. But look at the glorious Promise:

... he cannot be My disciple.

... meaning that if we love and value Jesus above and ahead of anyone else- we *will* be a disciple of Jesus. And being a true disciple of Jesus means that we have been forgiven and that we will inherit eternal life!

And so the glory of being a true disciple of Jesus and the glory of having all of our sins forgiven and the glory of inheriting eternal life and the glory of having the privilege and joy of being able to love God

and to bring God Glory forever far outweighs any hardship that we might have to endure to get there.

And that's the way I want to live the few remaining years that I have left in this world. And that's the way I want to spend eternity. Jesus shows us Who He is and what He has done and what He is going to do- and what all that means. And then He calls to wicked sinners to join Him! So Jesus' dying for our *Salvation* is His design for our *imitation*. So Jesus pays the price for our Salvation as He said in **John 10:16**

I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd.

And then He gives the strength for us to obey Him as He said in **John 15:4**

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me.

Now this won't be easy- but it will be significant. It will be eternal. This won't be easy- but it will be glorious.

2. Being a Disciple Means that we must Carry Our Own Cross

Luke 14:27

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Now what is being taught by many in the modern Church is that in order for us to serve God *effectively*- we have to be healthy and blessed and ripe with material goods. In other words- they teach that the absence of good health or money or material goods causes us to *not* be used by God at all, or to not be used to the extent that God desires for us to be used. And so the goal, of course, is for all of us to be healed and blessed – which they are then quick to tell you that this is not so they can become important mind you- no, not at all- but only to glorify God. Yea, right.

One man told me that the reason he drove around in a Cadillac was to show everybody how great God was. My question to him was: *"If that is true, why not a Lamborghini or a Rolls Royce?"*

The truth is that in order to mask his own desire to be seen and heard and his carnal desire to be thought much of- this man tried to sanctify his sin of magnifying self rather than Jesus by saying that he was doing it for God. Let us agree that that is not what Jesus meant when he talks about us carrying our own cross here.

Dear friends- there is a Divine Principal that I want you to understand about this subject that goes to the heart of what is fundamentally wrong with much of the teaching coming out of the modern Church and it is found in **Exodus 4**- so please turn there with me- **Exodus 4:10-13**:

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

11 The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

12 "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."

13 But he said, "Please, Lord, now send *the message* by whomever You will."

Now here Moses is arguing with God about God choosing him to lead the children of Israel out of 400 years of captivity. And even though God has shown Himself mighty to Moses through several miraculous signs and wonders right before his eyes- and even though God has called Moses to do what he is to do- Moses is basically telling God that he has a speech impediment, and, therefore, can't do what God wants him to do.

And so God is telling Moses that yea, he knows that Moses stutters because God made him that way. And by the way- God also tells Moses that He is the One Who made people who are born blind and born deaf and born mute.

And it is God that sovereignly allowed people to be born to which set of parents at what time and in what country, and God is the One Who- all by Himself- without consulting with anybody else- determines your sex and your race and the color of your hair and your height and

whether or not you are predisposed to whatever ailment you will struggle with in this life.

And what God is telling Moses here is this very important Principle:

God has called us to be faithful to Him and fruitful in His Kingdom and busy in the Work of the Lord in whatever condition and in whatever situation that God has sovereignly allowed you to be in.

And the struggles and the burden and the handicap and the lack and the trouble that you go through to do and to accomplish what God has called you to do is the Cross that God has chosen for you to carry. And that Cross has been specifically designed just for you – it is tailor made just for you. And God expects and demands that you carry that Cross. And you are to carry it without complaining and without murmuring and without bellyaching about it and without making excuses about how heavy it is and without giving up and simply casting the Cross to the side. And you do that because you know that God is the One Who gave that Cross to you.

So rest assured that whatever situation and circumstance God has sovereignly allowed you to be in will require that you carry the weight of that Cross yourself and here is something interesting. The Cross is always designed by God to always be more than you can handle. And so what God has called you to do will *always* be too much and too high and too far, and so it will *require* that you humble yourself and cry out to God for help to empower and enable and allow you to do what He has called you to do so that everything is *always* done “by God’s Grace”, and so that everything is *always* done “through the gift of Faith”, and so that everything is *always* done to God’s Glory and so that no flesh will boast.

And the point that I am making is that your Cross is not something that you need to overcome or cast out or be defeated by. Your Cross is the gift of God that God has given to you to assist you in humbling you that will prohibit you from elevating yourself and to always be the sort of person who is broken and contrite and one who trembles at God’s Word. And that always guarantees that God will look to you. So this is something very heavy and weighty and very serious

that God has called you to carry yourself- in, by, and through His Power and to His Glory.

You see, God has called every single human being on earth to know God and to love God and to enjoy God forever. And He has called everyone to do that based on the "General Call" of God to all humanity to repent and to believe the Gospel. But because we are all fallen- nobody in and of themselves desires to obey that General Call- not a single one. So because they do not *want* to- they will not. And so the Bible teaches that fallen and lost man *cannot* love and serve God gladly- absent a sovereign move of God into His life- precisely because they don't *want* to. And this is what is called "Moral Inability".

And so if anybody is going to be saved at all- then God the Holy Spirit must go to them first- before they are saved- where they are right then- in the filth of their sin, and while they are in abject rebellion to God, and while they have no desire to love God at all. And it is then that God sovereignly *imposes* Himself into their lives, and it is then where God sovereignly *violates* their will, and it is then that God *forcefully* and *violently* changes their fallen nature from being inherently rebellious to being Divine.

And so with that new nature- God gives them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe- *before* they ask for it, *before* they even want it, and *without* them cooperating with God in any way. And with those new eyes that God sovereignly gave them- in opposition to their will- they see the Truth. And with those new ears that God sovereignly gave them- in opposition to their will- they hear the Truth. And with that new heart that God sovereignly gave them- in opposition to their will- they believe the Truth.

And so with that new nature that God gave to them- sovereignly- God is able to convict them of sin, cause them to understand that Jesus is their only hope, and empower them to hate who they have become and hate their sin and love God so that they run to Jesus for forgiveness and Salvation.

And that is the result of God's "Effectual Call"- which is different than His "General Call". The "Effectual Call of God" is only for those who have been chosen by God from before the foundation of the world to be saved while the "General Call" for all men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel is for everyone.

And so what happens is that the Effectual Call is the means of Grace to empower the elect to be saved while the General Call is the basis by which all of the non-elect are damned.

Now I said all of that to say this. God has called everybody to know God and to love God and to enjoy God forever. And so it doesn't matter what condition we are in. For example- God has called some people to know Him and to love Him and to enjoy Him forever who live in the 21st Century in the greatest and the richest and the freest country in the history of the world- a country where it is relatively easy to prosper and to get ahead and to make money and to own possessions and where religious liberty is codified in our Constitution. And so even though persecution against Christians is beginning to rise in this country- we still have it relatively easy compared to other people.

But I would say to you that the freedom and the liberty and the riches that we all enjoy present a set of problems and temptations and trials all of their own- that are unique to a cultured and sophisticated and prosperous nation that third world countries have no idea of.

And so God has called us to be busy and fruitful and faithful in this country, in this Century, and with all these unique temptations around us- even as He calls believers in Bangladesh and Indonesia and Syria to be faithful and fruitful and busy in their countries with all their own unique struggles and temptations.

And so as far as knowing and loving and enjoying God forever is concerned- as far as being fruitful and faithful and busy in the Kingdom of God is concerned- we are not solving the problems of the believers in those third world countries simply by exporting more freedom and liberty and wealth to them. We *are* making their lives down here better- and we *are* allowing them to prosper and receive better medical treatment and things like that- and that is good.

But we are *not* helping them to be fruitful and faithful and busy in the Kingdom of God simply by Americanizing them and making their lives on this earth easier- because all we have done is to trade their own unique trials and temptations with ours.

And so Jesus tells us here to carry our *own* cross. In other words- we are to bear the weight and the struggle of our *own* unique situations and circumstances that God has sovereignly and providentially caused or allowed us to be in.

So, for example- God calls the blind man to remain faithful *in* his blindness- not simply because he is delivered *from* his blindness. God calls the cripple man to remain fruitful *in* his not being able to walk- *not* simply because he lives in a country where handicapped people have an easier time. God has called the man with no ears to be busy in the Work of the Lord *in* his deafness- *not* simply because technology can help him to hear. God calls the poor man to know Him and to love Him and to enjoy Him forever- *in* his poverty- *not* simply because he learns how to prosper.

And so if the blind is healed or if the cripple man is able to walk or if the deaf man can suddenly hear or if the poor man becomes rich- then these people are called by God to be busy and fruitful and faithful in their new found healthy and prosperous situation. And they will then face the unique trials and temptations that accompany those strands of life.

So the goal is to always and in all cases be faithful, fruitful, and busy- not simply to be healed or blessed or prosperous. In other words, before you become a Christian, sit down and count the cost and the perils of following Jesus. Because ultimately only those who genuinely value Jesus above all things are truly saved anyway.

So Jesus is unashamed and unafraid to tell us up front the painful cost of being a real Christian- valuing Him so far above all other human relationships- that the love you have for them looks like hate in comparison and carrying the burden and resisting the temptations and struggling against the unique trials and persecutions and temptations that go along with the situations and circumstances that God has sovereignly allowed you to be in so that regardless of the situation- you remain faithful and fruitful and busy to God's Glory, and on the pathway to your own fullness of joy. And Lord willing we will look at the rest of this next week.

Amen. Let's pray.