

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

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

Chapter 14- Luke 14:25-35

261- The Radical Cost of Following Jesus- Part 2

October 26, 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 last week I told you that that these words by Jesus are what the Puritans called "hard words". They are hard to hear, hard to read, heard to preach, and even harder to obey. But, as I said last week- hard words from Jesus are not meant to offend- although with some people they surely do. They were not meant to drive anyone away- although with some people they surely do. Hard preaching by Jesus was not designed to make you feel hopeless- although with some people they surely do.

The Bible reveals that hard sayings and hard preaching and hard words from the perfect Lips of God Incarnate offended and drove away many mathetes- the students- the disciples who were not really saved and only following Jesus for what they could get out of Him. And I have always been amazed at how these people left Jesus.

Most of the time- the Gospel records tell us that when mathetes or students or disciples had had enough of the straight and narrow path, when they had reached the end of their shallow and vacillating affection for Jesus, when their own hypocrisy and lukewarmness or even their own unregenerate hearts was exposed by what Jesus said- rather than repent, rather than fall on their face and cry out for Mercy, rather than plead with God to forgive them- these people just walked off and left Jesus standing in the middle of the road.

And there is a record of this in **John 6**- please go there with me. Now this is right after many of these students or disciples or mathetes who had been following Jesus had been healed and fed and blessed- and they became very offended at something Jesus said about Himself. And rather than bow before Divine Wisdom and humble themselves before Absolute Truth- they cried out to Jesus in verse 60 and said,

John 6:60b

...This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

And at this point- realizing that many of these students were about to leave- most of us would cave in to the pressure and begin to crawlfish about Divine Truth in order to keep the people- proving exactly what Jesus is talking about here in **Luke 14**- that we love human relationships far more than we love Jesus- precisely because we are willing to compromise with Jesus in order to maintain our human relationships.

But not Jesus. And so right at this point- with many of those who had been following Him for a long time ready to bail out- instead of compromising- Jesus laid it on even thicker, and look what He told them in the next few verses,

John 6:61b-65

61 ... "Does this cause you to stumble?

62 "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?

63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

So Jesus never hesitated- He never flinched. Jesus never ever- not the first time- did He ever compromise with Truth- because Jesus knew what we ought to know today- that if people are truly saved- they will love Him with an undying love, and they will love what Jesus says with an absolute trust. That's what saved people do- that's what all saved people do. And that is what they do- all the time.

Now it's not their fault- they can't help it- they have been born from above and the rebellious and fallen and depraved nature that could not and that did not love and serve God gladly has been supernaturally replaced with the seed of Christ, and the dominating tyrannical power that sin had over them has been forever destroyed and God has given them the greatest gift that any human being could ever have.

And that gift is not the gift of healing and it is not the gift of miracles and it is not the gift of prophecy- it is the gift of being able to love God and to value Him above anyone else and above everything else. God gives saved people the gift of being able and willing to Treasure Jesus Christ above all else- to the point where Jesus alone is the Lilly of the valley, and where Jesus alone is the Bright and Morning Star, and where Jesus alone is the beautiful Rose of Sharon, and God gives saved people the gift where Jesus is the fairest of ten thousands to your soul.

God gives saved people the gift of being able and willing to obey Christ- to follow Him- to go where He tells you to go and to do what He tells you to do. And He gives redeemed people the gift of being able to trust what Christ said, and He gives them the gift of being able to be convicted of sin, and Jesus gives saved people the glorious gift of being able to be contrite and to be humble and to tremble at God's Word.

And Jesus also knew that if they were not genuinely born again from a supernatural a sovereign Act of God- that their so-called love for Him and their value for Him was paper thin. And Jesus knew that these people would only love Him as long as He was doing what they wanted Him to, and they would value Jesus only until He did something or said something that didn't sit well with them- and at that point- right at that very second- they would turn their back on Him and walk away in a heartbeat.

And so what was the result of Him saying this? Look at the very next verse:

John 6:66

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

But among this huge crowd of students was a smaller group- a group within a group- who were real, they were genuine, they had been truly born again, they had been regenerate, they had received within themselves a new divine nature and were now hopelessly in love with Jesus and had been gifted by God to place a higher value on Jesus Christ than they did on anything or anyone else. And so Jesus turns to these men and asks,

John 6:67b-69

67 ... "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

69 "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

So this is an example of what happens when hard words are spoken- unsaved people head for the hills. But hard words produce "soft

hearts" in those whom God has chosen to save, and the result of those heard words in *these* people is that they will count the cost and they will joyfully follow Jesus and they will inherit eternal life.

So I would say to all of us that *whatever* God would choose to say to us that would produce in us a soft heart- 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 Puritans were correct- and hard words and hard preaching produces soft hearts- 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 preaching 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 Cost of Following Jesus

... that is- what being a true disciple will *require* of us- what it will *cost* us as we follow Jesus; what it will *demand* from us as we remain faithful to Jesus. And anytime you talk about cost- you are also talking about value. And so as we look at what following Jesus is going to cost us- we must also know that this is only because of how valuable Jesus really is. And that brings up another point:

Great cost is always associated with great Value

Now as we studied other hard sayings by Jesus in earlier Chapters of Luke- we found out that because Jesus used universally inclusive words like:

- ✓ All
- ✓ Anyone
- ✓ Whoever

... this shows us that Jesus was *not* simply speaking to those who stood around Him on that particular 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 these words here in **Luke 14** are radical- they are hard. And they are 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 the Church was radically different than it is today. The Christian Church was not always known to 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 always teach people that they could be healed and have the nicer things of life as long as they had enough faith, and that they were somehow exempted from sufferings and persecution and injustice- by that same faith- like you hear so much about today. No, 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.

The men that led the Church in previous generations 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. They preached and taught with great fire and passion about valuing Jesus above anything and everyone on this earth. They spoke about the majesty and the magnificence of the exalted Savior- that made technology and politics and money and power and material goods and homes and family look like heaps of human excrement by comparison.

Hard preaching about the hard sayings of Jesus produced softhearted men like John Gibson Paton- whose experience of the sweetness of God brought about through his obedience to the hard sayings of Jesus here in **Luke 14** caused him to forsake all and leave his beloved Scotland and go to the New Hebrides- a group of islands about 1,000 miles northeast of Australia to preach the Gospel to a tribe of people nobody cared about and who could never repay him.

At that time- back in the 19th Century- Paton wasn't spending his days downloading the latest app on his smartphone or saving for his retirement condo on the beach. No, this twenty-three year old man was being hunted down by hostile natives- 12,000 miles away from home. During one such attack- Paton wrote this down about the infinite value of Jesus amidst great suffering,

“Being entirely at the mercy of such doubtful and vacillating friends, I, though perplexed, felt it best to obey. I climbed into the tree and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but of yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and the yells of the Savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe in the arms of Jesus. Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among these chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone! If it be to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, to feel again my Savior's spiritual Presence, to enjoy His consoling Fellowship. If thus thrown back upon your own soul, alone, all alone, in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a Friend that will not fail you then?” (John G. Patton: Missionary to the New Hebrides, An

Autobiography Edited by His Brother [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, orig. 1889, 1891], p. 200)

Now the purpose of these hard words by Jesus here in **Luke 14** is to see if Jesus is really enough for us today- to see if Christ is really our Treasure, and our joy, and our security, and our hope, and our friend in times of loneliness, and our home, and our father and mother, and our power to look straight ahead. So these words by Jesus are designed by God on purpose to test you in all these ways.

Now last week- we saw that Jesus was 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 endurance. This is not a race to see who can throw more of their own possessions out into the front yard. This is not about legalism. 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 and 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 we began last week to see four hard sayings and we covered the first two last week-

- 1. Following Jesus Requires that Our Love for Jesus is Superior to Love for Anybody Else**
- 2. Following Jesus Requires that We Carry Our Own Cross**

... and so today I want to examine the third one:

3. Following Jesus Requires that We Count the Cost

Luke 14:28-32

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.

Now as I said- it is impossible for us to count the cost of doing something- in this case- following Jesus- without also- at the same time and to the same degree discuss the Value of the object- in this case- Jesus Christ- for whom we are counting the cost. In other words- Christ demands and requires things from us only because He understands that He is worth it. And so the cost that people are willing to pay is always predicated on the value of the object. And the higher the value- the more we are willing to pay the cost.

Now people risk their lives every day for a variety of reasons. For example- soldiers deem American and the Freedom that we in this country have to be more valuable than their lives. And, so, to risk their lives to protect and defend and advance Freedom is only logical and simply their reasonable service. And so they train and they practice and they study and they learn and they prepare themselves to fight against the enemy with joy, and with extreme dedication, and with passion.

Soldiers don't simply show up for work. They don't come in late and lay around and begrudge the training and the study and go through the motions. If they do- they will die in combat. Soldiers lay down their lives with zeal and with gladness- and usually it is a lifelong commitment. And they do this because they have set such a high value on what they count the cost to live their lives unto.

Many business owners value their businesses. And they are very willing to sacrifice their families and their children and their own health in order to build a business. And they pay the cost of long hours and study and learning and travel time away from family in order to build something.

And unlike many employees- business owners don't simply show up for work. They don't come in late and lay around and begrudge the training and the study and go through the motions. If they do- they will fail in business. Business owners lay down their lives with zeal and with gladness- and usually it is a lifelong commitment.

Now what is curious is that in this culture- we admire the soldier but many of us have less admiration for the business owner- even though their level of commitment and willingness to sacrifice is the same. The difference is that what the soldier pays the cost for benefits us all and what the businessman pays the cost for benefits a much smaller group of people. So as a society we deem America and Freedom to be more valuable than money and business. And thus those who sacrifice and pay the cost for the *nobler* goals are honored more.

But I would suggest to you that Jesus Christ is infinitely more valuable than either America or business. And Jesus is more valuable than Freedom, and Jesus is more valuable than life itself. The psalmist said,

Psalms 63:1-8

1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.

4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.

6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches,

7 For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.

8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.

So to value Jesus properly would be for us to be willing to pay the cost and to make the sacrifices necessary to make Him known and bring honor and glory to Him.

Now don't make these hard words more difficult than they really are. Jesus is not saying, *"There will never be time when you have a bed and pillow and a home."* He's not saying, *"Don't ever inconvenience yourself by taking care of your parents because you are studying the Bible"*. And He is not saying, *"I gave you a wife so you could ignore her."*

Understand these hard sayings the way you understand Jesus' words to the rich young ruler and his words to Zacchaeus. To the rich young ruler Jesus said, *"It is going to cost you all your possessions to follow Me"*:

Matthew 19:21

If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

But when Jesus came into the house of Zacchaeus- the little tax collector blurted out,

Luke 19:8

Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

And Jesus responded with joy and said:

Luke 19:9b

... Today salvation has come to this house.

So why the difference? Why did Jesus require *all* that the rich young ruler had and yet was pleased when the sinful tax collector was willing to give half- but not all- and repay those he had defrauded four times as much?

The difference in all these tough words as Jesus interacts with different people under different situations is *not* to create "Standard Operating Laws" that all disciples under all situations have to keep like:

- ✓ Thou shalt give away all your money!
- ✓ Thou shalt throw thy furniture out in the yard
- ✓ Thou shalt go without a bed!
- ✓ Thou shalt ignore thy parents because they're not saved

... no, the real issue is that Jesus knows everyone's idol. Jesus knows perfectly what is competing in every heart with affection for Him. And so He acts accordingly. In other words- Jesus will "do" and "require" *whatever* is necessary to bring about true love and true devotion to Himself from every single genuine believer.

You see, Jesus understands that our hearts are idol factories, dear friends. Our hearts work overtime- turning out new and innovative idols every day. And all of them are bad. And Jesus understands several key things about us- like:

- ❖ He knows that God made us to love Him
- ❖ He knows that our pathway to deep and profound joy and full satisfaction is through loving Him
- ❖ He knows that He Himself is the best Gift God could ever give to us
- ❖ He knows that other things compete with our love for Him
- ❖ He moves and speaks and does things in order to make Himself more attractive to us and more valuable to us than anything else

And so "counting the cost" is simply another way of saying that you agree with God about these things. Counting the cost means that you agree that God created us to love Jesus. And so you are willing to do or say or be whatever will allow that to happen. It means that you agree that our pathway to deep and profound joy and full satisfaction is through knowing and loving God- and so you are willing to do or say or be whatever will allow that to happen.

Counting the cost means that you agree that God Himself is the best Gift that He could ever give to us, and so you are willing to do or say or be whatever will allow that to happen. Counting the cost means you agree that other things compete with our love for God, and so you are willing to do or say or be whatever will *not* allow that to happen. Counting the cost means that you agree that God moves and speaks and does things in order to make Himself more attractive to us and more

valuable to us than anything else- and so you are willing to do or say or be whatever will allow that to happen. And it means that you will *not* rebel and pout and run away, and it means that you will *not* leave Jesus standing in the middle of the road when He says something you don't like, or He does something you don't agree with- but you will love Him all the more.

So Jesus is looking everyone of us in the face this morning and sees right to our heart. Let him do that for you now. Don't take offense. Don't walk away. He does this to win us for Himself. "Follow me!" is the goal. Being with Jesus is the goal. Valuing Jesus is the goal. And so counting the cost is simply the response to the value you place on Jesus. Because achieving the fullness of joy as we make much of Jesus is the goal.

Now this won't be easy. But it will be real good. This will be hard- but it will also be very glorious. And there will be joy even if there is continual sorrow. Paul said in **2Corinthians 6:10** that he was...

2Corinthians 6:10

... sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

So Jesus raises the issue in **Luke 14:26** about our families. And then He raises the issue about carrying our own Cross in verse 27. And here in verses 28- 32- Jesus tells us to consider the cost of both the things that we plan to do- like build a tower, and the things that have been forced upon us- like going to war- that we really didn't plan to do.

And the issue here in this illustration is twofold:

- A. Knowing, loving, and enjoying God through Jesus Christ must be *more valuable* than anything that we make plans to build or to accomplish in this life
- B. Losing our knowledge or losing our love or losing our enjoyment of God through Jesus Christ must be *worse* than losing a war

And if both of those things are true- then *whatever* sacrifice we are asked to make or *whatever* cost we are told to pay or *whatever* requirement we are demanded to satisfy to either possess Jesus Christ or not lose Him- is worth it and we will be able to not simply "pay" that

cost or "make" or "satisfy" those demands- but we will be graced by God to be able to do those things *with genuine delight*- because we have judged God and His Lovingkindness to be better than life itself!

So when we read things like where Jesus said, "*The Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*" How then do we think about our *own* home, and our furniture, and the security we enjoy there, and our comforts in the climate controlled year-round perfect atmosphere- our roach-free, mouse-free, ant-free, totally automated kitchen, with our new surround-sound four- on- the floor- overhead cam home entertainment center?

Jesus simply says to us, "*Follow Me*". And if we are saved- we bow to that and we guard our hearts from being captured with all the good and wonderful things that God has given- because we understand and we agree that while we are absolutely to praise God from Whom all blessings flow- we know that Jesus is more precious and more satisfying and more beautiful and better than all of it.

So when we read where Jesus said,

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.

The point is not that it's never right for us to love our parents or our wives or our children. The point is that under certain circumstances- it might be right *not* to. And so the issue at stake is *how* we loving or hating at the right time and in the right way serves the proclamation of the Gospel and the Cause of Jesus Christ by revealing just what our Treasure really is.

So who is first- Christ or family? What holds precedence- my *own* plans and my own ambitions and my own dreams or God's Will? What will I give as an excuse to God as to why I didn't follow Him- that things that I didn't want and that I didn't plan for were suddenly thrust upon me?

But for anyone to suggest that Jesus screamed in agony on the Cross and died under the full brunt of the Wrath of God that should have been poured out on me in order to facilitate me accomplishing whatever is in my heart to do in this life is just pure and simply

blasphemy. That is *not* Christianity, dear friends- it is the very essence of paganism. That is the very essence of exalting flesh at the expense of exalting Jesus Christ and it is anathema to the Lord.

Biblical Christianity is all about things like becoming humble and of doing great damage to our own inherent pride and self-righteousness and casting down human arrogance that seeks to be seen and heard and to be made much of. Christianity is all about being broken and contrite and crucifying flesh and mortifying the deeds of our bodies and decreasing in our own importance and living a life in the beauty of self-denial and of trembling at God's Word.

And so if any of you have been influenced by the modern pied-pipers who teach that Jesus died so that you could live the good life down here- please know that you have been deceived.

Jesus died so that by and through being graciously and mercifully forgiven- we might live our lives to God's Glory and the Cause of Jesus Christ- regardless of what that may mean to us personally. So we come to the Cross- not to receive power so that we may fulfill all our dreams and ambitions- no we count the cost and we come to the Cross to die. So coming to Jesus for forgiveness and Salvation means the end of us. Our lives are now hidden in Jesus Christ and we gladly lay down our lives so that people may know and love and enjoy Jesus Christ.

And here's the kicker- that we will live to God's Glory and the Cause of Jesus Christ- at our own expense- *joyfully and gladly*- never begrudgingly- understanding that the cost of serving and obeying and following Jesus is only relative to His magnificent Worth.

The point here is that Jesus Christ is absolute and all other allegiances are relative. And so there will be a hundred choices you must make in this life – that have no direct Biblical Command to settle the issue. And so at that point- the issue will be:

Do you desire Christ above all? Do you want to follow Jesus and to be fruitful and faithful and busy more than anything else? Is Jesus better than this other thing or this other person? Is God's Lovingkindness better than life?

So how do we do this? How do we go forward with what we have planned to do- like build a tower, or how do we go through what has been thrust upon us in this life- that we want or didn't plan to do- like

fight a war? How do we go forward with either one of these things and Jesus Christ still be supreme? What does this look like?

Are we to assume that valuing Jesus to the point where we count the cost and are then willing to sacrifice whatever God may require of us- are we to assume that this is simply another human work or another human labor that we must expend in order to please God? So is all this simply a matter of making up our minds or of putting forth more human effort or exercising human initiative?

No! A thousand times, no! If you do that- you are not broken, you are not contrite, you are not humble, and you are not trembling at God's Word. We are not pagans. We are not heretics. We are not Pelagians- who deny God's Grace and that go about to love and serve God by and through human willpower.

We are Christians and we are sons and daughters of the Lord Christ- who have become sons and daughters by Grace and through Faith, and we are the ones who will *continue* to know God and love God and enjoy God by that same Grace and through that same Faith.

And we are also spiritual sons and daughters of father Abraham- Who sought after a city-

Hebrews 11:10b

...which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

So imagine Abraham- living a life of security under the protection of his father in Ur of the Chaldeans. And then suddenly- without warning- God *imposes* Himself into Abraham's life and *interrupts* his plans, and God *shatters* his dreams and God *violates* his will and God makes demands of Abraham and God requires of Abraham things that were never even in Abraham's mind.

And so from that moment on- Abraham knew that God had called him to leave everything he had- for a land that he did not know and would have never voluntarily chosen. That was very costly.

Yet we know that Abraham is not alone. The Bible itself tells us that He is written about in sacred Scripture simply as an example of how God calls each of us to an obedience that's costly- like loving our enemies, and sharing the Gospel with people who don't want it, and forgiving those who hurt us, and battling sin.

So how did Abraham obey- when it was so costly? How did Abraham count the cost as Jesus tells us to do in **Luke 14**? Turn with me to just a few words in **Hebrews 11**.

Hebrews 11:8-10

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

There's the secret. Abraham obeyed *by faith*. So what does that mean? If you were going to travel somewhere *by bike*, that means that the bike is *how* you would travel. The bike is *what you would use* in order to travel. So in the same way- if you were going to count the cost and obey God *by faith*- that means that faith is *how* you would count the cost and how you would obey. So faith is how we pursue Christian obedience. But how does that work?

Faith is not some tool that we can use to get what we want out of God- as so many teach today. No, faith is simply trusting what God has said. Faith is trusting that God is not a liar, but that He is reliable and trustworthy.

So if faith means *trusting God what God said*, and if the writer of **Hebrews** tells us that Abraham obeyed *by faith*, that means that Abraham counted the cost and obeyed *by trusting God's Promises*.

And we can see that this is how God wanted Abraham to obey because of what God said to him. God started with a Command back in **Genesis 12**:

Genesis 12:1-3

12 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

So *how* did God want Abraham to obey? Not by just focusing on the Command. Not by just saying, *"I'm supposed to do this. God commands me to do this. This is the right thing to do."* No. God wanted Abraham to obey *by faith — by trusting God's Promises*. God wanted the Worth and Value of His Promises to so capture Abraham's heart that he would count the cost and be willing to obey Him- *joyfully*.

But that would not be easy. One reason is because Abraham's indwelling sin would urge him not to trust God. The other is because God's Promises were all future, and, thus, unseen to Abraham.

So, like all of us, Abraham would have needed to pray and ask God to strengthen his faith (**Mark 9:24**). He would have known that faith comes by prayerfully hearing God's word (**Romans 10:17**).

So he would have prayed and set his heart on trusting what God had said and promised until the Holy Spirit strengthened his faith so he believed, *"If I obey, God will . . . • make of me a great nation • bless me so I will be a blessing • bless those who bless me and curse those who dishonor me • bless all the peoples of the earth through me (my descendant, the Messiah)."*

Thus Abraham was counting the cost as he began to trust all that God had said. And that trust brought forth his obedience- *"Hey, Sarah, God has told me something wonderful. He promises that if we leave all this comfort and security and go to a land that He will show us, He will make of us a great nation. He will bless us and make us blessings. And He will bless the whole earth through us. So let's start packing!"*

And the very next verse says:

Genesis 12:4a

So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him...

So Abraham counted the cost after assigning great value to what God said. And that resulted in him trusting God- which resulted in him obeying God. And so that hard saying by God to Abraham that so disrupted his life- brought forth a soft heart that could believe and obey. And Moses and James and the Apostle Paul said two times:

Romans 4:3

***ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS
RIGHTEOUSNESS."***

Amen. Let's pray