

13. The Cost of Discipleship (1Q 2014—Discipleship)

Biblical material: Luke 12:49–53; Deut. 21:15; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Matt. 18:8, 9; John 14:1–3; Heb. 11:32–12:4; 2 Corinthians 1:7.

Quotes

- It never cost a disciple anything to follow Jesus; to talk about cost when you are in love with anyone is an insult. *Oswald Chambers*
- For those who feel their lives are a grave disappointment to God, it requires enormous trust and reckless, raging confidence to accept that the love of Jesus Christ knows no shadow of alteration or change. When Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened,” He assumed we would grow weary, discouraged, and disheartened along the way. These words are a touching testimony to the genuine humanness of Jesus. He had no romantic notion of the cost of discipleship. He knew that following Him was as unsentimental as duty, as demanding as love. *Brennan Manning*
- If you are going to walk with Jesus Christ, you are going to be opposed ... In our days, to be a true Christian is really to become a scandal. *George Whitefield*
- Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Questions

Is it right to talk about a cost to discipleship? When Jesus outlined the challenges of following him, what did he mean? How can we explain the positive aspects of discipleship in a better way? Do the other beings in the Universe think that their allegiance to God has a cost? What is the final prize—how do we explain this?

Bible summary

In Luke 12:49 FBV Jesus says, “I have come to set the earth on fire, and I really wish it was already burning!” What did he mean? He then goes on to talk about causing division... Paul explains in 1 Cor. 9:24–27 that you run for a prize, and the aim is to win a crown that lasts forever! Using dramatic language Jesus tells us to be single-minded in our focus on good, and if anything distracts us to “pull it out”! (see Matt. 18:8, 9). Jesus gives the wonderful promise and reassurance that he will return for us (John 14:1–3). Heb. 11:32–12:4 describes the heroes of faith, and consequently “For that reason, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of people who gave evidence of their trust in God, let’s get rid of everything that holds us back, the seductive sins that trip us up, and let’s keep on running the race placed before us.” (Heb. 12:1 FBV). Finally Paul writes to

the believers in Corinth that he has confidence in them as they share in both his sufferings and blessings (2 Corinthians 1:7).

Comment

We often speak of the cost of discipleship. Yes, there are consequences to choosing to follow Jesus. But how do we measure such a cost, and is it right to speak of such a cost when there is such a reward? How do we “give up all and take up our cross”? Much of such thinking shows a hidden perception. Jesus told his disciples that they would suffer persecution, and they did. But they considered this totally worthwhile, for now their lives were full of meaning and purpose, and nothing else mattered than sharing the good news of their risen Lord.

It’s not hard to see why. The disciples had grown up learning about God from the religious leaders and the scribes. The picture they received was not a pleasant one. With all the rules and regulations, God seemed petty and nit-picking. He also demanded sacrifices and strict observance of rituals that had lost their meaning for many. The concepts of God promoted by Jesus’ contemporaries were a long way from the truth, which is why Jesus spent so much time trying to correct them—regarding the Sabbath for example.

But seeing Jesus, and being told by him that seeing him was seeing the Father, everything began to make much more sense—and God looked much more attractive. Of course this was a developmental process, and it took some time. But after Jesus’ death and resurrection they were so glad to be his disciples, and they turned the world upside-down with their witness to the Lord they loved.

So for us. If we are in love with the God that Jesus came to reveal, then what could be better than to tell others that God is wonderful—and totally unlike the picture painted by the Devil! Instead of counting the cost, we should be counting the riches, the privileges that come from knowing God as he is. We are the ones who have gained insights into the marvelous character of God. We see something of the reasons why God acts as he does in the context of the great controversy. And we trust in his saving grace that transforms us now, and will be made complete when he comes. How wonderful to be a follower of Jesus!

Ellen White Comment

Satan has misrepresented the character of God. He has clothed him with his own attributes. He has represented him as a being of inflexible sternness. He had shut the world away from beholding the true character of God, by casting his shadow between men and the divine One. Christ came to our world to remove that shadow. He came to represent the Father. He said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” He prayed that his disciples might be one with him, even as he was one with the Father. Men have declared that this oneness with Christ is an impossibility, but Christ has made it possible by bringing us into harmony with himself, through the merits of his life and sacrifice. Why should we doubt the love and power of God? Why should we not place ourselves on the faith side of the question? Do you behold the charms and attractions of Jesus? Then seek to follow in his footsteps. He came to reveal the Father to the world, and he has committed to us the work of representing his love, purity, goodness, and tender sympathy, to the children of men. {ST, April 15, 1889}

Prepared June 19, 2013 © Jonathan Gallagher 2013