

## **My Thoughts for Sunday, 9 August 2015**

### **Don't Start Something You Can't Finish**

Have you ever been told this by someone you looked up to? Did you seek the advice of someone you trusted as a mentor or guide? Was this the answer you got when you explained your desire to start this new project? If you truly trusted this person, hopefully you followed his advice and re-evaluated the endeavor.

In our text we are going to consider, Jesus said very much the same thing, gave the same advice to those who desired to follow Him as His disciples. We look at the example He gave, written for us in Luke 14:28-30; *“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”* This is undoubtedly what your trusted friend was telling you about your undertaking. Make sure you can afford to not only start, but complete the project so you don't look like a fool to your friends and neighbors. Although your cost was probably only time availability and finances, the cost Jesus was dealing out to His followers was much more. Let's look back a few verses as Jesus laid out the cost of following Him as a disciple.

Jesus clearly stated, as written in Verses 26 & 27; *“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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”* Did Jesus really mean what He said, in that word, HATE? It is probably safe to assume that Jesus was stating some very firm requirements, but hate would completely go against the reason He came into the world in the first place. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* John 3:16. The writers of the Bible, under direct inspiration of God repeatedly stressed the love of the fathers for their wives and children. They admonished the wives to be in subjection to and to honor and obey their husbands as their husbands were in subjection to love and honor of the church and above all things, their Lord. Paul's “instructions for a Christian household” explains in detail the love that the Lord has instructed us to live by as His believers. Ephesians 5:21-33

What our Lord is telling us in our text is that if we truly wish to be His disciples we must take into consideration all possibilities of the demands that might befall us. We must be prepared to place Jesus and our calling to follow Him above all other family ties. The love of Christ has to be our primary love. The day may come, even here in the USA, when we might be in a position where we must defend our faith and belief in Christ to our death. This has happened throughout the early Christian church, with the uncountable number of martyrs, and is still happening in some foreign countries to our brothers and sisters. Will you be prepared to pay that price? Will you be able to put your faith and trust in the Lord above the safety and lives of your family and yourself?

So, do you still want to be a disciple of Christ? Are you prepared to pay the full and ultimate cost to gain eternal life? I pray your answer is an emphatic, YES! Jesus went on to say

that... *“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”* What is the cross you must bear? Is it possibly some infirmity or physical handicap that will remain as long as you are in this fallen world? Do you have A WEAKNESS you are fighting in order to be a better spouse, son or daughter? Do you have a fear in proclaiming the Gospel to your neighbors, friends or strangers? Rest assured, you are not alone, we all have our own crosses that we must bear in this sin-filled life; something that continues to plague us and keep us from being the true follower of Christ as we would like to be. Remember that God promises that He will never put before you anything you are not able to come through if you place your trust in Him through prayer. You can rest in the promise of our Lord. All these things will be taken away from us if we persevere to that final goal and enter the gates of heaven to be totally cleansed and purified.

Jesus never promised that we would have an easy life. He never told us that people would be flocking to hear us share His promises. But He did promise us that we would receive the same reception He got from the world. *“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”* The cost of loving and following Jesus openly may become very high. We may be forced to give up all we enjoy in this world to remain faithful to our greater love—that love we have for our Lord. But when one truly looks at the reward that is held out for us that cost becomes trivial.

We have already been made brothers and co-heirs with Christ in all that the Father has bestowed on Him. In Ephesians 3:6 Paul tells us that... *“to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,”* Again in his letter to the Romans, Paul states... *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”* Romans 8:16-17 According to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we have already been given that glorious position to be with Christ Jesus, *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”*...

Yes, my friends, the cost of being a disciple of Jesus is great, but the prize for our trust, love and perseverance has already been attributed to us. We have the Holy Spirit within us to guide us ever onward till we can actually, in completeness, join our Father in heaven at the side of our Brother and Lord. I cannot vouch for you or the condition of your heart when it comes to your love of the Lord; I can only pray for you and for myself that as He looks at us in judgment, He will see that all our sins have been paid in full through Jesus’ sacrifice and that He finds us Holy in His sight.