

## Luke's Gospel 14:25-35 Discipleship

*[The King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated]*

### Introduction

In our broadcasts we try to give sound biblical teaching on a wide variety of subjects. Please visit our website, [www.truth4today.org.uk](http://www.truth4today.org.uk) and see the full list of talks which have been given over the years. A web-search for "truth for today" will bring up different websites. Ours has a number 4 in the name, so it is truth 4 today. You can download any of our talks to listen, or print them off to read.

As well as looking at various topics, we have always felt the need to systematically go through the Scriptures verse by verse. The careful study of the Word of God is most valuable. It always has been, but I suggest that it is even more vital in these days, and in the society, in which we live. With so many voices all demanding to be heard, and each claiming to be worth listening to, the child of God needs to know "what saith the Scriptures." We have been studying Luke's Gospel, and today we begin a series of 6 talks beginning in chapter 14 vv. 25-35, under the title of **discipleship**.

### Our reading

As we have only eleven verses to look at today, I will read these for you, as I expect that not all of you who are listening will have your Bibles to hand. These eleven verses seem to me to divide into five smaller sections, beginning with the words, "And" in vv. 25-26; "And" in v. 27; "For" in vv. 28-30; "Or" in vv. 31-32; and "So" in vv. 33-35. I will read these verses, and make comment on them, as we go along.

### Our headings

Just to help us remember the message, I suggest these five headings for the verses as we have split them up.

1. verses 25-26 it is **our love which is examined**.
2. verse 27 it is **our commitment which is demanded**.
3. verses 28-30 the question is **have we counted the cost?**
4. verses 31-32 we need to be **ready for the conflict**.
5. verses 33-35 the question is **are we fit to be a disciple?**

### The background

It is always good to note the context of the verses which we are studying, and to be aware, too, that sometimes the intention is that we learn specific lessons from the passage. By comparing Scripture with Scripture we get a fuller understanding. I don't think Luke always gives us a blow-by-blow account. I think for a chronological record then perhaps Mark's Gospel is best. It has

been suggested that Luke presents events to his reader in more of a moral order. Having said that, it would appear that from the beginning of chapter 14, we have presented to us details of the Lord's teaching in the order it was given. The chapter begins with the Lord healing a man on the Sabbath day, and then giving two parables, one which spoke of the ambitious guest, and the other of the great supper. Parables are natural stories but with spiritual meanings, and in these parables the key teaching is God's grace, what it has done and how it should affect our behaviour. The verses we shall consider today, and the challenge of discipleship, flow out of a correct appreciation of God's grace to each of us who are saved. So we could say that discipleship is the right response by one who correctly understands the grace which God has shown to him or her - our "reasonable service" in response to the mercies of God, as Paul puts it in Romans ch. 12 v. 1.

## **1. Our love is examined – verses 25-26**

"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

After speaking the parable of the great supper, we find that great multitudes followed Jesus, and here we find the first lesson. Whilst the Gospel of God's grace was preached to the crowds, discipleship was to be an individual matter. Jesus turned and said unto them, "If any man come to me." (I trust that we all understand that the translators use of the word "man" does in no way exclude woman. Of course sometimes when the Scriptures say "men" it means just that, as it does in the same way when it says "women." But very often man is used for mankind, both male and female). So, let us be clear that the subject of discipleship is for all Christians, both male and female. The word "disciple" has the meaning of "one who learns by following." Although we often speak about the twelve disciples who were men, we know that many women also followed Jesus. So, the matter of discipleship is for the individual, not the crowds. This is so important as we look at these verses together. They are addressed to the individual. Often our Christian experience involves the fellowship of others, and this is a great blessing to us. But the matter of you and I being disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ is acutely individual.

On the face of it, the words of the Lord are very harsh. The thought of hating our 'loved ones' seems to be at odds with many other Scriptures we could quote. That is why I said earlier that sometimes we are being taught certain things in certain passages. We would be totally wrong to teach that Jesus said we need to hate our family. The Greek verb used here for "hate" also has the thought "of relative preference for one thing over another." (Vine's dictionary of NT words) So, what does it mean? Surely it must mean that my love for Him, my Saviour and Lord, must be so much greater than my love for any other. If we are to be true disciples, then we cannot put natural love and relationships before our love for our Master. Loving the Lord Jesus Christ will bring us closer to those who love Him, our brothers and sisters in Christ, whether they are our natural family or not.

## **2. Our commitment is demanded – verse 27**

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

We read in John ch. 19 v. 17, "And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him," and in Hebrews ch. 13 v. 13 we are told, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Nowhere in Scripture is there any suggestion that we are called to carry His cross, but we do have a cross of our own to bear. What does this mean? Well, it would not be an uncommon sight under Roman rule for a man to be seen with a cross on his back. It meant that he was a condemned man and was about to be executed. His life was over as far as this world was concerned. Thinking of this verse and its meaning, let us read the words Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians. "I am crucified

with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (see ch. 2 v. 20), and again “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (see ch. 6 v. 14). There is also a helpful reference in the Roman epistle (see ch. 6 v. 6) which shows that our crucifixion with Christ is metaphorical and not literal. Now I know that history records that some disciples of Christ were crucified, but that is not the force of the Lord’s words in our verse. The man who was bearing his cross was finished with this world, just as the apostle Paul says he was, crucified with Christ, and to the world. If we are to be true disciples of Jesus, followers of the Master, then we cannot be entangled in this Christ rejecting world. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live,” and I believe that is the position of every Christian through God’s grace. But Paul went on to say, “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Now that is a challenge! Is Christ living, is He seen, in the lives we live? As children of God, we ought not to be characterised by the world. The Lord in prayer to His Father says of His own, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (see John ch. 17 vv. 11-19) When I was younger I used to often hear part of a poem being quoted, which I have since found out is titled “The Young Christian.” It was written by a woman called Margaret Mauro when she was twenty two years old, and I commend it to you. Here are a couple of verses which summarise what I have been saying -

*And yet— "outside the camp"—  
'Twas there my Saviour died!  
It was the world that cast Him forth,  
And saw Him crucified.  
Can I take part with those  
Who nailed Him to the tree?  
And where His name is never praised,  
Is there the place for me?*

*Nay, world! I turn away,  
Though thou seem fair and good;  
That friendly outstretched hand of thine  
Is stained with Jesus' blood.  
If in thy least device  
I stoop to take a part,  
All unaware, thine influence steals  
God's presence from my heart.*

If we really understood the truth of what Paul says in relation to our “old man” being crucified with Christ, then we will reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our lives would then be such a witness for Christ, so clearly different from the ungodly world we live in. As we shall see in the next section of our passage, there is a cost to pay, if we want to be true disciples of Jesus Christ. He was not popular, and we won’t be either. We may even be shunned and made fun of. Yes, even in our so called liberal society, the words of Paul are very true, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (see 2 Timothy ch. 3 v. 12) In Roman times, crucifixion was reserved for the worst of criminals, and there was a particular despising (or loathing) of those who were crucified. If we are the most popular person at school, college, university, or at work. If we are that person that people want to be with at the sports or social club, if we are the person who has a great following on social media because of the lifestyle we lead, then perhaps, I suggest, we re-evaluate how closely we are following the despised and rejected Man of Calvary. Remember the words of Jesus to His own, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” (see John ch. 15 vv. 18-26)

### **3. Have we counted the cost? – vv. 28-30**

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath

laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.'

If you were to visit Edinburgh you would see a real life example of what Jesus was saying in these verses. With less than a third of the required finance raised, work started on an ambitious project to build a Parthenon styled building above the city. In 1822 the foundation stone was laid by King George IV for a building which was to commemorate Scottish soldiers and sailors who fell in the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). This was never completed and has since become known as 'Edinburgh's disgrace.'

The Lord is warning any would be disciples that there is a cost to be paid. I guess we immediately think that paying a cost means that we need to make a financial sacrifice. Well, that may be so. Many Christians have made huge sacrifices in relation to their personal wealth. But I suggest that maybe the easiest sacrifice for some to make. What about our time, our talents, our energy, our ambitions? Following Jesus will make demands on every aspect of our lives. Have we got what it takes to be a disciple, a true follower of Jesus?

Earlier in Luke's Gospel we read of a man who said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." In reply, Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (see ch. 9 vv. 57-62) I remember hearing experienced Christians warning us younger believers that the Christian life was not a bed of roses. The apostle Paul chastises the Christians at Galatia by saying, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (see Galatians ch. 5 v. 7). The writer to the Hebrews cites the athlete as he says, "And let us run with patience (or endurance) the race that is set before us." (see Hebrews ch. 12 v. 1) I think these Scriptures show that as well as a financial cost to discipleship, there is effort and energy required to truly follow Christ.

Listeners may know of George Beverly Shea who was called home in 2013. As a young man he had an offer of a popular music career ahead of him, but his mother was praying that he would choose a different path. She had placed the hymn "I'd rather have Jesus" (written by Rhea F. Miller) on the piano for him to find. He sat at the piano and composed the tune (which some of us will know) to a hymn which would be the turning point in his life. He turned his back on the National Broadcasting Company and instead joined the evangelist, Billy Graham, preaching the Gospel all over the world. Here are a couple of verses from that well known hymn:

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;  
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;  
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land,  
I'd rather be led by His nail pierced hand.  
  
I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;  
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;  
I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame,  
I'd rather be true to His holy name.

I wonder if we can honestly say, "I'd rather have Jesus."

#### **4. Are we ready for the conflict? – vv. 31-32**

"Or what king, goeth to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace."

The Lord Jesus Christ has won the victory over death, hell and the grave. He has, through His death, destroyed (or annulled) him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Some years ago a dear Christian friend said to me, "Stephen, we are not on the winning side – we are on the side that **has** won!" That's good, isn't it! We rejoice in that. However, although Satan is a defeated foe,

we know he is still the enemy of the people of God. Peter warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (see 1 Peter ch. 5 v. 8) Paul says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (see Ephesians ch. 6 vv.11-18) Today there is a huge market in war games, with young folk, and those not so young, sitting for hours at gaming devices fighting imaginary battles. Dear Christian, let me be clear, we are not fighting an imaginary battle like some computer game! Our enemy is only too real, and he wields great power. The devil is not the cartoon character as we see often him depicted. Peter warns us of his desire to destroy and devour. But we also have an enemy within, the flesh. If we are true Christians, then we will recognise that although we have the life of God in us, the new nature, we still have the old sinful nature too. I remember hearing a man preaching on the television. I listened for a few minutes, but when he claimed that he had reached the point in his Christian experience where he no longer sinned, I turned off immediately. Sad if he fooled anyone listening, except himself! As Christians, we are in a battle every day with opposition to the life of God in us, from without and from within. We all know how easily we are beset by sin. But the Lord is not suggesting for a moment that we make peace with the world. James asks the rhetorical question, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (see James ch. 4 v. 4) John commends the young men as he writes to them saying, "ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one," and to every child of God he says, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (see 1 John ch. 2 v. 14 & ch. 4 v. 4)

God has equipped us for the conflict. We have the whole armour of God to protect us: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and in our hand we have the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The question for us is, are we ready for the conflict?

## **5. Are we fit to be a disciple? – vv. 33-35**

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The apostle Paul was a great example of a true disciple, one who had forsaken all for his Lord and Master. In Philippians he writes, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" and "For to me to live is Christ." (see Philippians ch. 3 v. 7 & ch. 1 v. 21) In recent times the expression, "not fit for purpose" seems to be regularly in the news. Something bad happens and in the inquiry which follows, often persons or procedures are found to have been "not fit for purpose." In our closing verse the Lord says that salt has a purpose, a very important purpose in that it seasons and preserves. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus said of His disciples, they were "the salt of the earth" but again warned that salt is only good if it is salty. The Lord Jesus Christ has called us to be His disciples, to follow and serve Him in this corrupt world. This is our responsibility as well as our blessed privilege. Let us accept the challenge and, as His disciples, live lives which are "fit for purpose." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

May God bless you all.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on Luke's Gospel ch. 14 vv. 25-35, and the subject of discipleship. Talk no. T1142.

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