

THE LORD'S TEACHING ON DISCIPLESHIP
IN LUKE 14:25-35

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Luke 14:25-35 is Christ's detailed explanation of discipleship. He defined discipleship to the multitudes who were following Him. The distinct meaning which the Lord consigned is evident through examination of the word and its use in Luke 14. The word "disciple" has a historic usage in speaking of a learner, a pupil of some teacher. When the Lord asserted the instruction of Luke 14:25-35, he declared that being a true disciple is more than being a learner or pupil. Discipleship is important today because of the Lord's command to make disciples and the degree of commitment required of disciples.

The actual conditions of discipleship are two. The first is that Christ must have priority in the life of a disciple over any other persons. The persons are identified as any relative or even the person himself. This is closely related to the next priority of Christ over the preference of a disciple. The disciple must die to himself, have a life-style of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. He must bear his cross after the example of Christ Who bore His cross. These are the severe conditions set forth by Christ.

Christ presented Himself as the Builder, Warrior-King in the two parables of Luke 14:25-35. He is the One who had to count the cost. By this designation of Himself He also presented a reason for the severity of the conditions of discipleship. He went before His disciples and began the building and battle. He needs committed workmen-soldiers who will depend on Him and continue the program He started. These workmen-soldiers are warned that they can lose their effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Christ's teaching on discipleship in Luke 14:25-35. The context of the passage reveals that in this instruction on discipleship Christ presented His most detailed teaching. Luke 14:25-35 is Christ's most definitive explanation of discipleship. He was close to the time of His own crucifixion when He delivered this teaching to the multitudes who were following Him. He desired for them to understand that discipleship was not something to be taken lightly. He defined discipleship by the word He used, its conditions and by the parables and warning He gave.

The word translated "disciple" in the New Testament was given a special meaning by Christ. The word was used by Luke of believers in the early Church. These early Church believers had to make a total commitment to Christ when they accepted Him. The word "disciple" can be used of totally committed believers today.

The two conditions of discipleship are the priorities of Christ over all persons including the disciple himself and the will of the disciple. The will of a disciple must be surrendered to Christ through a death to self. The death of a disciple to his own self-will is cross-bearing, which is then evident in the life of a disciple.

Cross-bearing is lived by a life of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others.

The parables of this passage were used by Christ to demonstrate to the multitude that He is the One Who had to count the cost. He desired for them to understand that this is the reason for the severity of the conditions of discipleship. The Builder, Warrior-King needs workmen--soldiers on whom He can depend. These workers must also realize that in the work of building and battle they must fully rely on their leaders to enable them for the work.

The warning of this passage was to the true disciples. The Lord warned them that there was a possibility that they could cease relying on Him and lose their effectiveness as disciples. The Church of Christ today needs to understand discipleship so that the Lord can have the quality workers He desires.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

The following chapter lays groundwork for the study of the conditions of discipleship in Luke 14:25-35. The first part of this chapter examines the context of Luke 14:25-35. The second part of the chapter discusses the meaning of the Greek word μαθητης.

The Context

The context of the passage is discussed in three important areas. These areas include first, the other Gospels and second, the section of Luke's Gospel in which 14:25-35 appears. The last area of context is the surrounding context of the chapter.

Relation to Other Gospels

The terms of discipleship were stated by the Lord on occasions other than the one recorded by Luke. Two other occasions are: Matthew 10:37-39 and the parallel accounts of Matthew 16:24-26, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-25.¹ At least two different types of audiences were addressed when the Lord stated these conditions. In Matthew 10, He was

¹A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), pp. 101-1.

speaking to the twelve. In the parallel accounts, Mark relates a time when Christ spoke to the twelve and the multitudes (Mark 8:34). Also, in Luke 9, Christ addressed "them all" (Luke 9:23).

In Luke 14, these same conditions are given in stronger terms than the other occasions. They were also designated by Luke as spoken to "great multitudes." The twelve were certainly with the group, but Luke affirms that the Lord addressed the multitudes (Luke 14:25). In relation to the other times, Luke 14 is the latest in His ministry. The last statement of these terms is important because of the group addressed and because it is more detailed than the other occasions. They were given during His final journey to Jerusalem, which includes a significant portion of Luke's Gospel.

Section of This Gospel

The final journey to Jerusalem encompasses Luke 9:51 through 19:27. The journey is also known as the Lord's Perean Ministry. The emphasis of Luke is on the coming event of Calvary. Stagg makes this fact clear in this comment:

Luke clearly wants to keep the events at Jerusalem before the reader (9:51; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28). No actual journey is traced, but this is Luke's way of letting the shadow of the Cross fall across the whole section. Shadow is not quite the word for it, for what

Luke sees it as a triumph, not a defeat. It is an accomplishment (9:31), a fulfillment (9:51), and a completion (18:31).¹

The statement of these terms here is significant because of Luke's stress on Christ's own self-sacrifice. In view of His own sacrifice, Jesus spoke to the multitudes who were following Him. The next concern of the context is that of the chapter.

Chapter of This Gospel

The terms of discipleship in Luke 14 are preceded by several of the Lord's teachings. During His late ministry, He taught in parables.

As chapter fourteen opens, the Lord again heals on the Sabbath in the presence of the Pharisees. This was unorthodox according to their understanding of the Sabbath, a misconception which Christ sought to correct (Luke 14:1-6). Following this incident, the Lord spoke two parables to the Pharisee with whom He was dining. The parables have been designated: the "Parable of the Ambitious Guest and the Parable of the Great Supper."² Christ taught in the first of these parables against the pride of the Jews. In the second parable, He related to them their rejection of Himself and His invitation to them. The action and the

¹Frank Stagg, "The Journey Toward Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel," Review and Expositor, vol. 64, no. 4 (Fall 1967):501.

²C. I. Scofield, ed., The New Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 1102-3.

parables were aimed at the correction of the wrong ideas the Pharisees had about themselves.

Then, in verse twenty-five, Jesus is again among the multitudes seeking to correct their thinking about their relation to Him. Jesus continued to use parables in His final teaching on discipleship in this chapter where the two other parables had previously been used. Teaching in this manner is evidence of the lateness of this occasion (Matt 13:34; Mark 4:34). The next concern is the immediate context of the passage.

Passage of This Chapter

Verse twenty-five presents the setting in which Jesus declared the conditions of discipleship. It was a time when He was surrounded by many followers. An appropriate comment presented here is that of G. Campbell Morgan who affirms:

It is important that we keep in view that eager crowd, attracted by him, inclined towards him, all of them feeling they would like to be enrolled as his followers. Jesus turned and faced them, and in what he said, we find perhaps the supreme instance of his statement of the terms of discipleship.¹

Jesus was again interested in correcting a group of people. He wanted them to understand that being His disciple was not something to be taken lightly. Jesus was not speaking about salvation in this passage, but true discipleship. Concerning the statement of these terms Calenberg asserts:

¹G. Campbell Morgan, Studies in the Four Gospels (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), p. 175.

Whatever the spiritual condition of the group, Christ's purpose was to teach the true meaning of discipleship in light of His approaching suffering in Jerusalem. Being his true disciple meant more than just following Him and more than just believing on Him.¹

This final statement of the terms of discipleship was to a multitude who had attached themselves willingly to Him. In some degree, they were believers and Christ stressed what it meant to fully commit oneself to following Him. It is a passage with a clear subject.

The context of Luke 14:25-35 demonstrates its importance in: the group addressed which is unique in Luke's Gospel, the detail of the passage and the time during Christ's ministry. Added to the above, the passage is a passage of correction with very strong words and clear stress on the subject of discipleship. The next concern of Chapter I is the word μαθητης.

μαθητής

The following section explains the usage of this word in Luke 14. The explanation is drawn from the basic meaning of the word, lexical and historical. The meaning is then explained further by stating different usages of the word in the Gospels Matthew, Mark and John. Next, the special usage by Luke is asserted, and the last usage discussed is that of Christ in Luke 14.

¹ Rick Calenberg, "The Teaching of Christ on Discipleship," Unpublished Paper for Postgraduate Seminar on The Teachings of Jesus (Grace Theological Seminary, 1976), p. 19 (hereafter cited as Calenberg, "Christ on Discipleship").

Historical Meaning

The noun μαθητής is taken from the verb μαρθάνω which means: "to learn."¹ More evidence of this historical usage is gathered from the following assertion:

A man is called a μαθητής when he binds himself to someone else in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. He may be an apprentice in a trade, a student of medicine, or a member of a philosophical school. One can only be a μαθητής in the company of a διδασκαλος, a master or teacher, to whom the μαθητης since the days of the Sophists generally had to pay a fee.²

Thus, the basic historic meaning of μαθητής is a learner who is attached to a teacher. This does not mean a commitment to the teacher in all areas of life. Further understanding of the word is gained from the lexical meaning.

Lexical Meaning

Arndt and Gingrich mention several meanings which are: pupil, apprentice, disciple, adherent of John or of Jesus, and Acts; μαθητής are members of the new religious community.³ The meaning of this word is still at this point discerned to be a general term. The general biblical usage clarifies it further.

¹ Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 483 (hereafter cited as Brown, New Testament Theology).

² Ibid., p. 484.

³ F. William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 486-87.

General Biblical Usage

The New Testament has a limited use of this word; it is used only in the Gospels and Acts, in which it occurs 264 times.¹ In only a few times that it is used, it does not refer to disciples of Jesus. In these instances, it refers to disciples of: John the Baptist (Matt 9:14; Acts 19:1), of the Pharisees (Matt 22:16); of Moses (John 9:28).

In reference to the disciples of Jesus, Calenberg makes an accurate observation. He asserts the μαθητής is to speak of disciples of four different conditions. The first three of these are:

1. The Twelve (Matt. 10; Luke 6). These were His disciples in a unique sense.
2. The Multitudes who were a large group of mixed disciples. They were those who were drawn out of curiosity to follow Christ, listen to His teaching and observe His miracles. That many were not believers is indicated in John 6:64, 66 also in Luke 6:17.
3. The Uncommitted, Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38). Here was a man who had evidently come to believe in Christ as Messiah but never followed Christ openly. Only after Christ's death did he in any way identify with Christ.²

Calenberg demonstrates that the word μαθητής is used with different degrees of commitment of those who are called disciples. Although Luke 6:17 is listed above as a usage of disciple, where it does not mean a true believer or disciple, he does use it in a special way. Judas Iscariot is called a disciple in John 12:4.

¹Brown, New Testament Theology, p. 483.

²Calenberg, "Christ on Discipleship," pp. 5-6.

Thus far, it has been exhibited that the word historically means a learner. In agreement with this, is the lexical meaning which carries it a little further in designating disciples as belonging to Christ from the New Testament. (John's followers are also called disciples.) Then the preceding general biblical usage displays the word to be applicable to different shades of meaning. The word has more significant meaning in New Testament use. The Gospel of Luke establishes his special use when coupled with his use of the word in Acts.

Luke's Specific Usage

Luke had as a purpose for his Gospel "to set forth in detail" a record of the life of Christ (δι' ἡγήσιν). As has already been demonstrated in the context section, Luke had an emphasis on the journey to Jerusalem. The emphasis now is on his use of the word μαθητής. Concerning this usage is a statement from Friedrich who affirms:

It is thus more remarkable that in his Gospel (as distinct from Matt. and Mark, also John) the description of the disciples of Jesus as μαθητής breaks off at 22:45 (Gethsemane), and is never resumed. This can be explained only if we assume that it was due to theological considerations. The term appears again only in Acts 6:1 onwards, and here it refers, not specifically to the personal disciples of Jesus, but to all Christians.¹

The above quote also relates how Luke used the word for all believers in the book of Acts which establishes further his

¹Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1967), pp. 442-43 (hereafter cited as TDNT).

special usage of μαθητής. Luke used μαθητής with special emphasis and so did the Lord in Luke 14, when He declared the conditions of discipleship.

The Lord's Usage--Especially in Luke 14

One who was truly to be a pupil or learner of Christ had a certain relationship to Him. The Lord Himself gave the fullest meaning to the word μαθητής when He stated these terms. Calenberg asserts:

The final and most restrictive use of the term is found and defined in the passages to be discussed (e.g. Luke 14:26, 27, 33). It was Christ's desire that men who had believed on Him go on to make a total commitment to Him as their Master. Only then would they truly qualify as His disciples.¹

The Lord brought this word to its most technical usage in Luke 14. Therefore, the word began with a general meaning and in the context of Luke is narrowed down to a distinct meaning.

Two other factors combined with the Lord's meaning applied to μαθητής in Luke 14 make it valid for use in the church today. First, the word is not found in the epistles, however, the concept of discipleship is found there in passages such as Romans 12:1, 2. Second, the Lord commanded that disciples are to be made in every nation (Matt 28:19, 20). The Great Commission endures as a command for the church today and so does the Lord's conditions of discipleship in Luke 14.

¹Calenberg, "Christ on Discipleship," p. 6.

The context of Luke 14 establishes the importance of the time, the length and the group addressed in the declaration of the requirement of discipleship. The word had a special meaning to Christ and Luke and is proper for use today in speaking of Christ's followers. The actual conditions are investigated next.

CHAPTER II

THE CONDITIONS--LUKE 14:26, 27

The requirements of discipleship were declared by Christ in the above listed verses. They were declared by statements which assert the necessary priorities of discipleship. Christ stated these conditions as two negatives that keep a follower from being a disciple. When Christ is in first place, all associations and life direction are controlled by that priority of Christ in the life. The beginning of this priority is the decision that loyalty to Christ comes before all other loyalties.

In the early Church, these priorities often demanded a choice. A choice of following Christ against the wishes of family was necessary for early Christians, especially Jewish ones (Matt 10:34-36; Luke 12:53). The believers in Acts were called disciples as Chapter I of this paper established (Acts 6:1). The early Church had to make an immediate choice to follow Christ and to be His disciples in conjunction with accepting Him as their Messiah. Thus, they were called disciples by Luke. They put Christ first in all areas of life. The choice of Christ as the priority in life over persons and life direction must be made by believers today or they "cannot be" His disciples.

Chapter II discusses the different areas of life in which Christ must be in first place or one cannot be a disciple. The final section of the chapter relates these requirements to present-day Christianity.

Priority of Christ Over Persons--Luke 14:26

The discussion here is concerned with what the Lord meant when He said a disciple must "hate . . . his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life" (Luke 14:26). The Lord's use of this word is related to the meaning of the word itself and its use in Luke 14. The Semitic use of strong terms is examined from the Old Testament. Then, the use of the same word in other New Testament contexts is evaluated. Added to the above is the practical application of this concept.

The Views

The hatred of which the Lord speaks is understood by some to be used in a literal sense. The first commentator who understood the literal meaning of this word is Lenski. He affirms,

Much ingenuity has been expended on the verb "hate" to little or no effect. Instead of leaving μισεῖν in its true sense "to hate" it is generally reduced, even "watered down till the point is gone." The startling thing lies not in the verb "to hate" but in the objects to be hated, one's own father, etc., with the still more startling climax; and also his own life. . . . This is nothing but a repetition of 12:49-53, father against son, etc. Despite all of this hate in God his love remains, and the two are entirely compatible (see 6:27), each even to the highest degree of intensity.

So the hate required for discipleship goes together with our love to our parents, etc., that love which understands any evil in them and would with the help of Jesus remove it.¹

Lenski used the word "hate" literally but modified it by the other passages used. He understood the "hate" to be directed toward evil in relatives and the evil within one's self that would hinder him from discipleship. If this were the meaning of the term, a literal usage would be correct. Lenski's view loses strength when Luke 14:26 is compared with Matthew 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. . . ." The verse from Matthew is another time when Christ stated the conditions of discipleship. Lenski's position also loses weight from the lexical examination of the word μισεῖν, the Old Testament usage, and other New Testament usage of a Hebrew comparative idiom.

Another view of the interpretation of "hate" is that of Plummer:

"Does not hate them so far as they are opposed to Christ." The context and the parallel passages (Matt. 6:24; 10:37) show that the case supposed is one in which choice must be made between natural affection and loyalty to Christ.²

Plummer is closer to the correct interpretation of the "hate." It is true that loyalty to Christ is placed over

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), pp. 785-86.

²Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary. The Gospel According to St. Luke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 364.

natural affection, in this idiom. However, Plummer just understands it as a hypothetical case where there is a necessity for a choice. He does not go far enough in his cross references related to Luke 14:26. He does not compare this usage with similar Old Testament usage of "hate," and he does not explain Matthew 10:37 about "love less." The comparative idiom view fully explains this "hate."

The Word

μισέω is from μισέω and means "to hate." However, in the lexicon, the meaning is qualified by the Hebrew word it is used to translate. מִשָּׂא " . . . is sometimes found with the modified sense of indifference or relative disregard for one thing in comparison with another."¹ The word is used with a comparative sense in some places in Scripture. It is a strong verb, and A. T. Robertson asserts, "The orientals use strong language where cooler spirits would speak of preference or indifference."²

The usage of strong terminology was common for the oriental people whom Jesus addressed. He used strong language to impress them with the severity of His conditions for discipleship. Jesus did not mean a literal hatred because Scripture commands elsewhere that parents are to be

¹G. Abbott-Smith, A Practical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), p. 293.

²A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), p. 200 (hereafter cited as Robertson, Word Pictures).

honored (Eph 6:1-3). Luke 14:26 is a first class condition sentence. If the "hate" is not evident, then the result is certain--a follower is not a disciple. The Lord said in effect, "If you do not hate your relatives, you automatically are not able to be my disciple." Similar language is found in the Old Testament, which is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Old Testament Similar Use

The two wives of Jacob are mentioned in Genesis 29:30-31 where the Scripture states, "And he loved also Rachel more than Leah, . . . Leah was hated. . . ." Jacob "loved more" and "hated." The issue here is that these verses are a comparison of Jacob's love for his two wives. Because he loved Rachel more than Leah, his love for her is considered as hatred.

Another use of this type of comparison is that of God's favor toward Jacob and Esau. Malachi 1:2, 3 clearly presents this comparison where it is affirmed: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? said the Lord; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." Pentecost correctly evaluates this use of a comparative idiom when he says:

By choosing Jacob to be the heir in the line of Israel, He set Esau aside. This was not a matter of the affections; this was a matter of the will of God in which God sovereignly purposed to fulfill His promise made to Abraham and Isaac through Jacob rather than Esau. Esau became the father of a great race. But God's purpose

rested in God's sovereign choice, the choice of Jacob rather than Esau.¹

Choice is important to God; especially the choices of those who belong to His Son. To be a disciple of Christ, a decision must be made that sets a priority of Christ over all other persons including oneself. New Testament employment of this comparative idiom adds to the understanding of it.

New Testament Similar Use

The idiom is present in Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13. Jesus taught in both of these verses that a man cannot serve God and money. He asserted in the following manner, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; . . ." (Matt 6:24). If a man tries to live for money and God, he will prefer one above the other, so that his care for the lesser one seems as if it were hatred. It is a matter of divided priority--something a Christian cannot be controlled by and be a disciple.

Matthew 10:37 is the final passage which helps clarify this comparative idiom. In this verse, the Lord said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. . . ." Matthew 10:37 is from a passage about the requirements of discipleship (Matt 10:24-42). Verse thirty-seven is similar to Luke 14:26, but it speaks of

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, Design for Discipleship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 67 (hereafter cited as Pentecost, Design for Discipleship).

loving father or mother more just as the Hebrew idiom asserts because of its comparative form.

The word μισέω, the Old Testament Hebrew idiom and the New Testament use of that same idiom established the fact that the "hate" in Luke 14 is not a literal hate. Matthew 10:37 fully exhibits this because it also is in a passage speaking of the requirements of discipleship. However, the strength of the language displays the necessary strength of the priority of Christ over others and one's own person. The love for Christ is to be strong enough that in comparison to it, the love for relatives and even one's own life seems like hatred.

The Application

Christ is to be the Person of highest priority in a disciple's life. He is higher than the person of a disciple himself. Ryle makes this statement:

He only meant that those who follow Him must love Him with a deeper love even than their nearest and dearest connections or their own lives. . . . He did mean that if the claims of our relatives and the claims of Christ come into collision, the claims of relatives must give way.¹

Ryle exhibits in this quote the correct action of the will of a disciple which is directed by his proper priority of the Person of Christ. "Hate" in Luke 14 means to love less which in comparison to a disciple's love for Christ seems

¹J. C. Ryle, Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951), p. 167.

like hate. The love for Christ places Him before any earthly ties. The established priority motivates the will to action, if and when necessary, in continuing the priority of Christ over others and self. Loving Christ more than one's self could mean martyrdom, if the Lord so willed. Death for Christ was the will of God for many early disciples, which leads to the subject of cross-bearing.

Priority of Christ Over Preference--Luke 14:27

Cross-bearing is a familiar term to many Christians, but it is not correctly understood. Some of the misconceptions of this term are: disappointments, pain, sickness and grief.¹ Neither is a disciple's cross part of, or a continuation of Christ's cross. It is not self-crucifixion or a personal burden, nor is it the wearing of a jewelry cross. Rather, it involves a disciple and the priority of Christ over his own will in all of life. It involves volition, humiliation, death and the benefit of others. A decision to bear his own cross (ἐαυτοῦ) is necessary for every disciple. The decision establishes the priority of the following of God's will and word in the life of a disciple. This concept is explained in more detail in the rest of this section. The areas of discussion are concerning Jewish understanding, a word peculiar to Luke and John, and

¹Norval Geldenhuys, "Commentary on the Gospel of Luke," The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 398.

the comparison of other verses about cross-bearing to which is added the relevance of the concept today.

Jewish Understanding

The Jews understood Jesus' declaration about cross-bearing in the light of the Roman practice of crucifixion and from the practice of rulers before Rome. Josephus records crucifixion as early as Antiochus Epiphanes, who made an expedition against Jerusalem. Josephus speaks of it in this manner: ". . . and were crucified while they were still alive and breathed."¹ Therefore, what the Lord spoke of was not something with which the Jews were unfamiliar. The Roman practice was for a condemned criminal to carry his cross to the place of execution. The bearing of the cross is expressed in Luke 14 by author Luke with an uncommon word for bearing a cross.

A Distinct Word

The word βαρτάζω is used of Jesus literally carrying His cross in John 19:17. It is used by Luke in 14:27. Thayer presents the lexical meaning as "to take up in order to carry or bear; to put upon one's self (something) to be carried; to bear what is burdensome: John 19:17; Luke 14:

¹Flavius Josephus, Josephus' Complete Works, translated by William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1960), pp. 256-57.

27."¹ Fulfilling God's will sometimes is a burdensome course of life. It is a life of self-sacrifice. However, a disciple does not do this on his own, but with the help of the One who lived a life which was the supreme example of self-sacrifice. Jesus spoke of cross-bearing with His own cross-bearing as the pattern for His disciples.

Comparison of this usage by Luke and John demonstrates the significance of Luke's usage of it in Chapter 14 of his Gospel. The similarity is exhibited between the disciple's cross and the cross of his Lord through this distinct usage. A pertinent statement is asserted by the following quote: "Since carrying is an exertion of power and thus includes an exercise and application of will, the word takes on ethical and religious significance. . . ."² Here again is the necessity of the use of the will. A believer must make a decision to establish the priority of Christ over his own desires.

Crucifixion was common in Palestine and in Luke 14: 27 a significant word is used for cross-bearing. This word was used at a time in the later part of Christ's ministry close to his literal cross-bearing and crucifixion. Examining other related passages on this concept clarifies the understanding of it.

¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1886), p. 98.

² TDNT, p. 596.

Some Views

One author understands cross-bearing as social involvement. Kagawa asserts that there are three steps in cross-bearing.

The work of Christ manifested itself in three ways: first in teaching; second in practice; and third, in consciousness. His teaching was that of love; His practice, the practice of love; and His consciousness that of the cross.

We must show ourselves Christians in the details of life, . . . a consciousness of God is necessary. We must have clear and strong convictions of our mission of atonement; we must share in the purpose of God, who seeks to redeem all. The fundamental principles of redemption are not contained in theology alone; they must be actualized in social ways.¹

The above view has a wrong application of the atonement. He is extending the work of Christ to His followers. A disciple, by his cross-bearing, can add nothing to the work of atonement accomplished by Christ. Atonement is the finished work of Christ alone. The cross-bearing disciple does share in the work of God by living a life of self-sacrifice. Cross-bearing is more than participating in God's program of salvation for men.

A second view of cross-bearing is that it is obedience.

Just as His own cross was the supreme expression of His own perfect obedience, tried to the utmost, so must Jesus bring each disciple, through an awful process of

¹ Toyohiko Kagawa, Meditations on the Cross (Chicago: Willett, Clark and Company, 1935), pp. 128-31.

inner crucifixion, to the end of His own self-will, and bring him to do the will of God.¹

Cross-bearing is a matter of obedience for a true disciple, but this obedience is more than a process of inner crucifixion. It results in a life beneficial to others, the life of Christ lived through His disciples.

One more view is that of Meyer from his commentary on Matthew. "To take up his cross means, willingly to undergo the severe trials that fall to his lot (2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10)."² Trials are included in cross-bearing, but the concept involves more than that. It involves a voluntary death, a self-sacrifice.

Chafer presents cross-bearing in a more biblical manner.

A true definition of the believer's cross-bearing has been given in 2 Cor. 4:10-11, where it is said: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." By self-adjustment to the will of God, being ready even for a martyr's death, the attitude of Christ Himself was reproduced in the apostle who was ministering to the Corinthian believers.³

¹L. E. Maxwell, Born Crucified (Chicago: Moody Press, 1945), p. 111.

²Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 217.

³Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol. 7 (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), pp. 120-21.

Chafer understands the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice in cross-bearing with a willingness to continue that self-denial to the point of martyrdom. However, he is not aware of more than self-sacrifice which is evident from the quotation of Scripture he uses. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," means a death to self. Cross-bearing involves a death to self, to one's own ambitions and desires. It includes a death to self and a life of voluntary self-sacrifice lived for the benefit of others. It is based on a decision, the type of decision of which Romans 12:1, 2 speaks, "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. . . ."

Cross-bearing is based on the death of Christ on the cross. He especially had His own cross in mind when He spoke of discipleship here in Luke, because He was close to the time of His cross. Cross-bearing is something that must be started by a definite act of the will. The disciple's cross-bearing differs from that of his Lord in that it is a path of life; the cross is taken up "daily" (Luke 9:23). A decision begins the cross-bearing. It is a decision which "takes up the cross" and continues with a priority of the will of God, no matter what it brings, in the life of a disciple. It is important to know how Jesus' hearers understood cross-bearing.

Positive Statement of Cross-Bearing

Luke 14:27 is a negative assertion concerning cross-bearing. If a believer does not bear his own (ἑαυτοῦ) cross and follow Christ, he cannot be a disciple. Positive assertion of this concept is found in Luke 9:23-24.

In the King James Version, these verses read as follows: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

"Coming after Christ," ἔρχεται ὀπίσω μου is, in discipleship, following His example. It is a life lived with a commitment to the priority of the will of God in that life. In Luke 14:27, if a believer does not do this, he cannot be a disciple. Following Jesus is bearing the cross. Hastings' comment verifies this: "The literal meaning tends to merge partly or wholly into the metaphorical sense of conforming to the example of Jesus, in living, and also, if need be, in dying (cf. Matt. 10:38; 16:24)."¹

For many early Christians, following Christ did result in death. In Luke 9:23, the desire to follow Christ must be followed by action--the decision which establishes the priority of the will of God in the life that results in

¹James Hastings, ed., A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 603.

continued following (ἀκολουθεῖτω). The Greek tenses used in Luke 9:23 are important.

Lenski observes the significance of the Greek tenses by asserting:

The first two imperatives (ἀρνησάσθω ἑαυτόν and ἀράτω, deny himself and take up) are properly aorists, for to deny self and to shoulder the cross are momentary acts; but the third (ἀκολουθεῖτω, to follow) is present, for to follow is a long and continuous course of action. The distributive καθ' ἡμέραν makes the definite taking up of the cross a daily act, which is punctiliar each time. The two aorists acts are the preparation for the durative present act; and the three always occur in this order.¹

Exhibited in Lenski's statement is the necessity for decision--a definite act.

Also, it is evident that cross-bearing is not a one time event: it is a life style; a lifelong process. It begins a one time decision with continuing results. The true disciple must "bear his cross daily" (Luke 9:23). Although the figure of crucifixion implies a one time experience, the previous verse states that it is a daily experience. An attitude of self-sacrifice must continue. Paul stated the idea of daily cross-bearing in 2 Corinthians 4:10-11: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." The denying of self is a prerequisite to cross-bearing. Luke 9:24 is another statement of the necessary self-denial. "For whosoever would save his life shall

¹ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 519.

lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).

Self-denial followed by cross-bearing leads to fulfillment--to usefulness for Christ. One who has made a decision to follow Christ has denied his own will and made a decision that establishes the priority of the will of God in his life. Only after this is done can one be truly called a disciple of Christ. J. Sidlow Baxter speaks about the fulfillment which Luke 9:24 describes. He affirms:

That which counts is always that which costs. We must lose ourselves if we would save others. Jesus did, and so must we, in our lesser way. What we selfishly retain we lose. What we sacrificially give up we gain.¹

Adherence to the will of God is necessary for a disciple just as it was for Christ, that is, adherence to His will and His Word.

If a believer does not make a decision to bear his own cross, a decision which denies self and establishes the priority of the will of God, he cannot be a disciple. The concept of cross-bearing contains the principle of self-denial in Luke 14:27, but Luke 9:23-24 relates the necessary factors involved in cross-bearing with the result of applying the truth to the life or not applying the truth. Luke 9 is a positive and negative detailed presentation of the doctrine, while Luke 14 is a brief negative treatment.

¹J. Sidlow Baxter, The Master Theme of the Bible (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1973), p. 312.

Cross-bearing is based on a decision by which a believer denies himself, dies to himself, and establishes the priority of the will of God in his life. This decision must be kept current, not made again each day, but enforced each day. It is a priority which sets God's will before his own. Pentecost summarizes well the doctrine when he declares:

When God asks a man to take up his cross, God is asking a man for Jesus' sake and in Jesus' name to accept whatever manifestation of His will God sets before that individual. Your cross and my cross and Christ's cross will all be different. . . . Discipleship is dependent upon a willingness to accept God's will as God makes it known to you and to identify yourself with Jesus Christ in the discharge of that will. That makes one a disciple.¹

Cross-bearing then, in Luke 14:27 was a negative presentation of the doctrine to an audience who would understand the meaning of the term. When Luke 14:27 is compared with Luke 9:23-24, it is evident that it is a decision which establishes the priority of God's will over that of a believer. The disciple who is identified with Christ by this decision to bear his cross will accept whatever the will of God purposes for him, even as far as death for Christ.

Discipleship is total commitment and identification with Christ. This commitment affects and shapes every area of life. In Luke 14:26-27, Christ told a multitude that was following Him that if they did not have the priority of

¹Pentecost, Design for Discipleship, p. 36.

Himself over persons and their own will, they could not be His disciples. One must decide that he wants to be a disciple, but it is not a decision to be made lightly. It is a difficult path to follow if the decision is made, but even more difficult if it is not made (Luke 9:24). The total commitment to Christ must be demonstrated in relationships, in death to self and the adherence to God's will--to Christ's will. It must be a continuing attitude--"daily" (Luke 9:23, 2 Cor 4:10). It differs from the figure of Christ's cross-bearing in that His was completed quicker. A disciple must continue his decision of cross-bearing in daily attitudes of death to self for the sake of others.

CHAPTER III

THE PARABLES AND WARNING

The Parables--Luke 14:28-32

The two parables about the cost of discipleship have some different interpretations. The differences are concerned with the identification of the builder, warrior-king. Once the person of the parables is determined, then counting the cost can be determined.

The lesson of the two parables is one set forth in two different figures. This is evident from the final phrases of verses 28 and 31 which read, ". . . and counteth the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it?" and ". . . and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him and twenty thousand?" The idea of counting the cost is present in both parables. Several views demonstrate the variation in interpretation which exists concerning these parables.

The first of these is that of Barnes who asserts:

Every man who becomes a follower of Jesus should calmly and deliberately look at all the consequences of such an act and be prepared to meet them. Men in other things act with precedence and forethought. They do not begin to build without a reasonable prospect of being able to finish. They do not go to war when there is every prospect that they will be defeated. Religion is a work of soberness, of thought, of calm and fixed purpose, and no man can properly enter on it who does

not resolve by the grace of God to fulfill all its requirements and make it the business of his life.¹

Barnes' view leaves much to be done by the would-be disciple. Even if his determination is by the grace of God, much of this decision is dependent upon the follower. A decision that makes Christ the first priority in the life (Luke 14:26-27) is necessary for discipleship. It seems odd that the Lord would place another difficulty in the path of discipleship after He stated the extreme measure of priority which is necessary for discipleship. The life of discipleship is made possible by His grace from beginning to end. After the priority of discipleship is established, the follower is a disciple. The will is involved in discipleship by making the decision that establishes the priority of person and preference. The concept of the disciple counting the cost in one way or another is advocated by many scholars in their interpretation of these parables.

Guthrie's view is similar to Barnes'.

Jesus illustrated His meaning by saying that no one puts in a foundation without estimating the cost of the whole house, or goes to war against a well-organized and powerful enemy without weighing the possibilities of carrying the campaign through to success. That is simple human prudence.

The same principle of forethought should apply to Christian discipleship. It demands wholehearted renunciation, and those not willing for so great a cost would be well-advised to make no start.²

¹Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, vol. 2: Luke and John (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 99.

²Donald Guthrie, A Shorter Life of Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 112.

The follower spoken of by Guthrie must decide if he is capable of discipleship and then choose to go on or quit. Guthrie also understands much of discipleship as being dependent on the disciple and not on His Lord. Also, a follower who decided that he could not be a disciple and did not try would have an excuse--these are Jesus' own words. The would-be disciple determines if he has enough to complete the task.

A variation of interpretation is one that comprehends the cost of discipleship as being related to the will of the would-be disciple. Henrichsen states,

Jesus used this kind of situation to emphasize the importance of carefully counting the cost of being a disciple before committing oneself. Don't start something unless you are willing to finish it.

Note that Jesus said, ". . . and is not able to finish it. . . ." For the disciple, . . . the ability traces back to the will. The ability to be a disciple is ours through the resources of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:3); the only factor we need to add to the equation is that of our will.

The problem with this interpretation is that man is asked to add to grace something from within himself. When trials come, this disciple's will might not be strong enough. The weakness of this view is demonstrated as the author continues.

"If you are unwilling to pay the cost," says the Lord, then send your ambassador and sue for peace! As a Christian you can go to the devil and say, "Look Satan, I am already a Christian and I am on my way to heaven; but I want to make a deal with you. If you leave me alone I will not be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. I will not threaten your hold over the lives of men or

invade your kingdom. In return, don't you bother me. Let me live in comfort and quiet."¹

A Christian is certainly not ever encouraged anywhere in Scripture to make a deal with Satan. The facts are quite the contrary (Eph 6:11-17, 2 Tim 2:1-6). A believer who made such an agreement, if it were possible to do so, would be in need of chastening.

Pentecost has a similar explanation, except it does not suffer from any ideas about an agreement with Satan.

The man who proposed to build the watchtower in his vineyard decided how much he at that time could devote to building it. The parable does not suggest that that was all that the man had. That amount was what the man was willing to commit to the building of the tower. The king was willing to commit only ten thousand troops to this project. In the light of the work that was to be done the man decided how much he would commit out of what he had to the matter at hand. Now, our Lord was saying to those would-be disciples, "When you consider this matter of discipleship, I am not asking if you are willing to commit ten or twenty or thirty or fifty percent to me, I am demanding that you commit one hundred percent of what you have to me. If you are not willing to recognize My absolute right over every material thing that I have given to you, you cannot be My disciple."

The first erroneous matter in this explanation is the assertion that the builder and the king did not commit all that they had to the task before them. It is implied in the parables that the builder and the king had to consider if they had enough to complete the project before them. It is reading into the passage to say that they did not commit all

¹Walter A. Henrichsen, Disciples Are Made Not Born (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1974), pp. 38-39.

that they had. A bad hermeneutical principle (eisegesis) is employed by Pentecost.

Also, something of the will of the would-be disciple is necessary for completion of the task. The determination of the will establishes the priority of Christ over every other person including one's self and his own will.

Trench suggests an alternate to the involvement of the will of the disciple. He relates interpretation to Luke 14:33, "So likewise, whosoever he is of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." He states that, "It is the poor, those who, counting up their means discover that they have not enough to carry through and complete the work, and that of their own they never will have enough, and who therefore renounce all that they have, it is these and not the rich, not, that is, they who walk in a vain conceit of their own riches (Rev. 3:17) who are able to finish the tower."¹

Trench separates these two parables, in the explanation of them, as teaching the same truth in two different ways. Self-reliance or counting the cost is the opposite of what these two parables teach. A would-be disciple cannot rely on himself according to Trench's understanding.

The warrior-king is interpreted by Trench as a would-be disciple who asserts his own self-righteousness in

¹Richard Chenevix Trench, Studies in the Gospels (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 259.

an attempt at discipleship. This assertion constitutes fighting against God, the king with 20,000. Trench explains that a would-be disciple is a man trying to be such in his own strength instead of abandoning any hope of self-sufficiency and allowing the Lord to make him a disciple.¹ The man fighting against God is one who does not realize that he does not have enough to build the tower.

The teaching of the parables is differentiated by Trench by this interpretation, although the teaching of man's insufficiency is the same for both of them. The most difficult item of this interpretation is the concept of a would-be disciple fighting against God. One who has established the priority of Christ in the life would find it difficult to fight against God, especially when this priority is over even his own life. The inability of the would-be disciple is evident in these parables, but there is more than that.

The connection of the parables with the preceding demands for discipleship is that of illustration. They are two illustrations which demonstrate a reason for the severity of the demands of discipleship. G. Campbell Morgan states an interpretation of this passage which agrees with the rest of the Bible. He begins by affirming,

I do not know any one passage of the New Testament that, I think, has suffered more in interpretation than this. The reason of this is probably to be found in one

¹Ibid., p. 264.

little word in the Authorized Version. In the Revised Version, both English and American, we read that after He gave the illustrations, He said, "So therefore." Now, the Authorized Version rendered that, "So likewise." That little word "likewise" has misled us in interpretation. If He said, "So likewise" that must suggest that He meant, "If you are coming after Me, you must count the cost, as the man who is going to build a tower must count the cost. Or as a king going to war, must take counsel whether he is able to meet him that comes with twenty-thousand, with his ten thousand; so must you take counsel as to your ability to end the war victoriously."¹

Even though translations like the NASB translate the "οὕτως³ therefore," many commentators treat the verse as though it were "likewise." This is the beginning of the strength of Morgan's interpretation. Morgan continues the support of his explanation in the following manner:

That would mean that after He had stated the severity of His terms, He said in effect: "If you are thinking of coming with Me, you had better count the cost." He meant nothing of the kind. As a matter of fact, His very terms show that there must be no counting of the cost, that if a man is to come after Him, there is to be no comparing, and bargaining between earthly loves and the call of Jesus, that a man hesitating in the call to fellowship with the Cross cannot come. He was not telling men that they must count the cost. He was telling them that He had to count the cost. He is the Builder. He is the Warrior King. That is why He used these illustrations. He said "So, therefore," that is why the terms are severe, that is why you cannot be my disciple save on fulfillment of these conditions. It was as though He said: "I am in the world for building and for battle, therefore I have to reckon upon the quality of My workmen and My soldiers."²

Morgan connects his interpretation with the rest of the Bible. The whole program of redemption fits into his

¹G. Campbell Morgan, Studies in the Four Gospels (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1927), pp. 177-78.

²Ibid., p. 178.

interpretation. This is especially true of the building of the Church. The Lord knew the crowd that was following--some people with only a light commitment. He wanted them to understand that He wanted quality not quantity in His workers. Again Morgan presents a convincing argument stating:

All the Biblical revelation shines through this. He was nearly at the end of His ministry. Six months before, or nearly so, He had used the same two figures of speech about His work. At Caesarea Philippi He had said: "On this rock I will build My Church"--building; "And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"--battle. On both occasions, He revealed His own estimate of His work in the world.¹

The writer of this thesis agrees with Morgan's view, because it has such harmony with the passage in Luke and the rest of Scripture. Christ stated the conditions of discipleship and a reason for those conditions. After the reason for the conditions, the Lord stated the sufficiency of the one enlisted with Him in building and battle.

The Abandonment--Luke 14:33

Christ is the One Who counted the cost, the One Who leads His disciples. They must look to Him after they have established the priority and understand the reason for the conditions. In this dependence on Him they must "forsake" any dependence on themselves or what they have.

Some commentators understand this "forsaking all" to apply to a disciple's material possessions. MacDonald

¹Ibid.

is one such commentator who declares, "What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one's material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the gospel."¹ The above definition does not clearly define what it means to forsake all. The material possessions of one person might be used in a great way to spread the Gospel. MacDonald cites missionaries who forsook all to go to the mission field and members of the early Church who parted with all their possessions.

History also relates to us Christians who had great wealth which was used for the Lord, such as R. G. LeTourneau, who started a Christian college with his money. Also, in 1 Timothy 6:17 Paul instructs Timothy to, "Change them that are rich in this age, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God. . . ." Some in Biblical times were wealthy and did not forsake all their material goods. They were instructed on how to manage their wealth and how not to use it. MacDonald himself states that "God's ideal is that the members of the body of Christ should care for the immediate needs of their fellow believers. . . ."²

¹ William MacDonald, True Discipleship (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publishers, 1975), p. 9.

² Ibid., p. 16.

If some believers are to care for the needs of others, then they must have more than enough for themselves. The Lord is interested in our stewardship of what we have, that is, having everything, ourselves and our material possessions, under His control. MacDonald modifies his definition later in this way:

Each of us stands responsible to God as to what it means to forsake all. One believer cannot legislate to another; each person must act as a result of his own exercise before the Lord. It is a tremendously personal matter.¹

MacDonald has limited this forsaking to material possessions. The "forsaking" follows the two parables where Christ is demonstrated to be the Builder and Warrior-King who wanted quality workers. His workers must submit all that they are and all that they have to His control and depend on Him not themselves or their material possessions. Geldenhuys speaks with accuracy when he affirms that

It means that he must give Christ full control over his whole life with everything that he is and all that he possesses, and that under His guidance and in His service he should deal with his possessions in the manner that is best. In some cases it has meant, or will mean, that a man will have to take leave of his worldly possessions and to go into distant lands to work for Christ. In most cases, however, it means that a man in his ordinary life places his all at Christ's disposal to such an extent that, while still remaining in possession of his goods, he honors and serves Him thereby.²

The disciple has the proper priorities in life and a total dependence which is evident in commitment of everything

¹ Ibid., p. 18.

² Geldenhuys, "Commentary on the Gospel of Luke," p. 399.

to Christ. The disciple realizes his need for strength, for enablement for the building and battle. The disciple is the property of his Lord as the military man is the property of the military.

The Warning--Luke 14:34-35

Jesus had stated the conditions of discipleship, that is the essential priorities, after which He stated the essential dependence, which is then followed by a warning. The warning was to those with the spiritual capacity of true belief ("those with ears to hear"). The Lord was telling these would-be disciples that it is possible for a disciple to lose his effectiveness. Paul himself wanted to be careful that he did not become a castaway (1 Cor 9:27), and for that reason he "kept under his body in subjection." A disciple has provision for building and battle, but he must know that there is a possibility of his disobedience to his leader, and through disobedience he could lose his quality of discipleship.

Salt represents the quality of discipleship spoken of by Christ in Luke 14:34-35. "The salt, in Scripture symbolism, is the whole life-retaining antiseptic influence of the Spirit of God. . . ."¹ Salt was also used in the ancient world as an agent to prevent corruption, spoilage in meat, and was used for flavoring. It is different from

¹Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, vol. 1: The Four Gospels (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 588.

anything it touches and, therefore, influences what it contacts. The disciple should be an agent to prevent corruption and season the world around him. The individuals with whom he comes in contact should not be the same by virtue of that contact.

The figure of savorless salt is from one of two sources. The first is salt that actually has lost its saline quality. Some believe that this was possible because the salt in Palestine was not pure salt. It was mixed with other substances, which contained chemicals that would remove the saline quality from salt.¹ This may be the source of the figure or it may be an "impossible figure" used by Christ.

Lenski states that it is not necessary for this figure to be a reality. Jesus uses impossible figures. "Who ever lights a lamp and clamps a peck measure over it? Who ever goes out to gather figs from thistles?"² The figure of savorless salt then, whether taken from real life or an "impossible figure," is a valid way of showing that a disciple may lose his quality of discipleship. He may be cast away.

¹ Leon Morris, "The Gospel According to St. Luke," Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 237.

² R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 791.

When a disciple has lost his savor, he is useless in that condition. Salt that had lost its savor was no longer good for fertilizer on the land or to throw on manure to decompose it. Savorless salt could only be thrown out. The use of salt as fertilizer and decomposer for manure conveys the idea that the savorless salt is a figure taken from real life. A disciple must be careful that the affairs of life, such as loving this world or his own life, do not cause him to turn away from discipleship. Turning away from discipleship is turning away from dependence on the Builder, Warrior-King and depending on one's self.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ desires disciples today just as He did in New Testament times. He commanded His apostles to make disciples. The word "disciple" can be used of Christians today who are totally committed to Christ. Luke used the word of believers in Acts; they were believers who were totally committed to Jesus. The total commitment involves the proper priorities, of Christ over all persons including one's self and Christ over one's personal preference--cross-bearing.

It also involves a reason, the fact that Jesus is the Builder, Warrior-King Who desires quality workmen. These workmen must depend on their Leader. The final element of discipleship is a warning that loss of that quality of life is possible if one depends on himself and not his Leader in building and in battle. The Builder, Warrior-King is the One Who counted the cost and went before all those He enlists as workers. Therefore, He can be depended upon to complete the project He has begun. He wants workers on whom He can depend.

The Lord's instruction on discipleship should be taught by pastors and Christian leaders in this day. It is still a serious matter and one considered to be a disciple must still meet the conditions set forth by Christ.

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